

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL BOY.

IN FIVE CHAPTERS. I. THE HOUSE ARAB.

FROM an early period, on occasions of detected felony, the frequent larceny, burglary, or riot, it was customary to accompany the fore-ordained punishment—always given "for my good"—with an awful prophecy. It referred to those premature endings which the law allots, with circumstances of great solemnity and superfluous publicity, as set out in the public papers. This was so rung in my ears, as the president of the court martial proceeded to pass sentence, that I began to consider it as a certain doom, directly and disgracefully ending the prospects of a long life, and which only some frantic exertion could avert.

The first occasion on which the prophecy was uttered was, I recollect, on the introduction into the family of a drummer, who had been bought at a bazaar by a beneficent patron, and conveyed, as it were, to trustees, for the joint use of myself and sister. The drummer literally blazed with vermillion, and, varnished, stood on a sort of hollow chamber, whence, on the turning of a feeble wire winch, issued a sort of plucking twang, somehow associated with quills. At the same instant his arms rose and fell in unequal jerks and spasms. Amid the universal jubilation which welcomed this officer—and he was as cordially received on the female side as though he were alive and wore "real scarlet uniform"—it was noticed that I remained silent, and unmoved—discontented, it was assumed, at being fettered by a co-trustee. There was some truth in this theory, but already I had perceived the logical discrepancy between the interior quill music and the outer tympanic motion, which, as a result, did not fairly correspond. This, it seems to me now, should have occurred to more practical minds than mine. I also *did* resent the co-partnery. What had *she*—a girl!—to do with drummers—*dans ce galère*? Within half an hour from the arrival of the musician—the donor being loaded with honours, that is, receiving sherry above in the drawing-room—the drummer was in my own lair, lying on his side, completely separated from the musical chamber, on which were still visible his footprints in glue. The chamber itself had been laid open, the mystery disclosed, pieces of quills revolving. The wreck was complete and

irreparable, when word came that the donees were to attend in the drawing-room in full tenue, bearing their present, and return thanks "to your kind friend, Mr. Bagley," and then this outrage was discovered. The scene may be conceived. Some excuse was made to the generous patron, one, I fear, scarcely consistent with the truth; but he was asked to dinner on the following Sunday, and on his departure a court martial hastily summoned. It was then, before the punishment, that the gallows were first foretold.

Just as people talk now of "the great gold-dust robbery," so now do I bring back "the great jam puff robbery," which is the second important occasion on which it was prophesied that the outraged majesty of the law would be vindicated in my person. The "jam puffs" had been put away in the wing, as it were, of a side-board. (So it was constructed—a receptacle for teas and groceries to the right and left, while in the space between, lurked, cozily and modestly, a stupendous sarcophagus, or *garde de vin*.) Some insanity, or self-delusion, had left the wing open, or there had been an apparent locking. Prowling about, some instinct had revealed to me this oversight. Not Aladdin could have been so dazzled; not only the jam puffs, but jam itself, half a dozen pots of marmalade, lump sugar, and other treasures, all revealed. But the puffs were irresistible; I would have been tempted, I fear, into an arrangement about my ultimate spiritual safety, had the arch enemy held in his unseemly paw or claw, one of these delicacies. The flavour of paste and jam combined was too much. I knew well that the delicacies were fore-ordained for a guest that day, a gentleman in orders, for whom they had been selected with care. I recked not. The fit was on me. I swallowed the booty with haste and discomfort, the rich paste flaking off, the jam deliciously emollient. The guilty morsels were gobbled down. I was meditating a second puff, on the desperate plea that, having gone so far, I might go further (the whisperings of conscience were of course stifled), when—a footstep approaching! A nice ear, sharpened by guerilla and predatory habits, reported it to be the governess. I was at the window in a moment, far away from the violated cupboard. But, alas! I wanted the art of assuming an "unconcerned air," which is *de rigueur* for a first-class operative. I at the window with a

down, defiant, and suspicious face, disengaged, not breaking anything, destroying no furniture—this was enough at once to fix suspicion. With an habitual instinct, the governess's eyes wandered to the various objects in the room, and seeing mine fixed with a stupid persistence on the sideboard, she flew to it. All was revealed; the missing puff (they had been ordered by her). The case was too serious to be dealt with; the head of the house was called down, the wretched malefactor was examined; the tiny flakes about his lips—the general air of jam—a plum-stone found on the carpet, &c., were circumstantial evidence. Then it was, before committal, that the solemn prophecy was again heard.

These two little scenes will help the reader to an idea of the attitude I occupied towards our family. I see myself at this far-off era—I am speaking of the pre-boarding-school time—trudging along the weary and monotonous dunes of childish education: a red-cheeked, bold, insubordinate urchin, a gamin wearing a very green frock, glazed belt and buckle, and over whom there was much periodical shaking of heads, tears, and agonies of responsibility. It was what might be called a purely female household; three sisters, an anxious mother presiding, and an imported governess assisting. The little scene lay in an adjacent country, and the district of this early probation was the outlying portion of a large city, where the more solid metropolitan fabric began to fray off as it were, and open into the still decent suburb. It was the skirt touching the green fields of the country, and yet was strictly town. This amphibious attitude was specially chosen for the grand and absorbing end of "bringing up the children," and promoting their dear health both of mind and body. Streets, sloping down a hill many ways, led off fan-like, to soft green lanes, pleasant country-roads, to the sea itself, and, a more serious business still, to a great park. Our walks came round every day at a fixed hour, with Model Prison-like strictness, being preceded by a rigorous enforcement of uniform. Then, having passed the proper officer, who reported "our being fit to be seen," we were duly marshalled, and with the governess, Miss Simpson, as sergeant of the little force, set forth hand in hand. How I recal the monotony of that road, ever the same—Miller's Mall, it was called—which we paced day after day, strictly in pursuit of health. It was garnished with ditches on each side, richly stocked with "pinkeens" and other noble fish, while frogs and sticklebacks abounded. I could have stopped the whole day engaged in the fascinating and absorbing sport. But this would have been a pastime the "low boys" of the district followed. Was I not being correctly brought up "as a gentleman?" and the sergeant had her instructions accordingly. When I looked to the green field or common on one side of the road, and saw the juvenile commons or plebs of the district engaged uproariously in hunting the wild cat, which, driven by cruelties from town life and town roofs and

tiles, had become savage; or when I heard the roar and cheerful quarrel arising from the game of "hurling;" I would have entered into an arrangement on the spot with any capable magician who would have secured me a like enjoyment. No one can conceive the force of my hungering and thirsting after rustic sports, the cheap joys of nature; going out for the day with contemporaries, getting thoroughly dirty and hot all over, residing in ditches and bogs, firing brass ordnance of a calibre nearly that of a magnum bonum pen, and, above all, the proprietorship of a knowing terrier with a love for sport. None of these things were allowed to me. I was looked on as a sort of street Arab, one of the tares of bad tastes and inclinations, which female hands were always busily plucking up. I have no doubt a good deal of promising young wheat was unintentionally grubbed up in the process. This, I believe, was principally owing to the baleful influence of an old friend—and an elderly friend, too—of the family, a retired clergyman, Mr. Bickers, who had known our parent in a former and happier state; a sour dry curmudgeon, but who possessed the most extraordinary influence over her, which in angry moments I was inclined to attribute to alliance with evil spirits. This man, always coming to give advice, and sitting for hours, during which time he accepted sherry wine and cake profusely, had taken a dislike to me, simply because he knew I had sounded the depths of his infamy. Rare but splendid banquets were given in his honour, when he would graciously "fix his own day," and name a friend or two whom he would like to meet. Sometimes he would have a banquet given to welcome one of his own personal familiars, whom he wished thus inexpensively to compliment. These awful festivities left their mark on the establishment, and cast their shadow, not only for weeks after, but for a fortnight before, when the house resounded with the din of preparation. The now-recording Pariah, indeed, looked forward to them with something of the zest with which the brigand expects the coming diligence, for during the banquet he was known to prowl, escaping the sentries placed to watch him, and intercept the *descending* delicacies.

Mr. Bickers's hostility could be more immediately traced to one particular overt act.

When it was known that Mr. Bickers had arrived below, and the usual express had come to Miss Simpson to hurry her little force into full uniform and send them down, it was curious to observe how differently the news affected us. The young ladies—already incipient coquettes—got on their frocks with alacrity, and offered their tiny heads to the rough brush, and their soft hair to be tied up with showy ribbons by the Mary or Jane then in office. To them this going down to company was a welcome treat. They scented the campaigns of later years from afar. At that time they reckoned but nine or ten years. But the present Pariah had to be fetched from some den in the roof or purlieu where his lair

was; the spot he dearly loved, where he had his tools, where he made ships, and (more delightful still) daubed his stolen paint, or perhaps (more exquisite enjoyment still) from the disused loft of the stable, to be scaled by a rotten ladder, or yet a higher, more ethereal enjoyment, the coach-house, where the green family chariot lay in state with an almost mayoral state. I pause to describe these joys.

Entrance to this Elysium was effected by an abstracted key; and *then* followed such a pastime! A friend or two being privily admitted—for it was a service of danger—such a throwing open of the chariot-door, flinging down of the steps with hurry, à la laquais—such folding of them up again, presto, with professional speed, banging the door, touching one's hat, and flying up behind into the back seat! the carriage being supposed to be in the act of rattling off. This joy was repeated again and again. I knew nothing that could be set beside it; and with the assistance of a friend, who played the part of owner, and rode luxuriously inside, and gave directions to "Drive to Thirteen, Rufus-square, east side," it became almost dramatic. But it was infinitely, awfully, perilous. The danger of detection was extreme; and if discovery followed, it was believed that a punishment analogous to breaking on the wheel—any how, a punishment too severe for even its shape to enter into our imagination—was reserved for the offender. Once, indeed, when the Footman was in a hurry to climb up behind, when the chariot was supposed to have driven off with more than ordinary speed, his foot slipped, and he "barked" all his shin severely against the edge of the step. His cries—"barking" of another sort—had there been any one at hand, would have betrayed him. But he managed to totter to a place of safety without attracting observation. He was noticed to walk lame, was promptly seized and examined; but tortures could not have wrung his secret from him.

The process of washing the carriage—the wheel twirling round, the mop, the abundance of water gushing and splashing—were even more delightful in their way; but the Pariah's penchant in this direction was well known, and on the day selected for the ablution, the police were on the alert, and observed him narrowly the whole time.

To return to the Rev. Mr. Bickers. Fetched from his lair then, with streaks on his face, the green frock all dirty—"Your best frock, too, sir!"—his mouth already swelling into a surly pout, later to take the habitual expression of sulk, the Pariah was made to dress. His face was duly burnished by Mary Jane, on the truly venomous principle, as it were, which, when the subject is repugnant, takes the shape of upward scrubbing, the pressure coming chiefly on the nostrils. The frock is cleaned in a storm of severe reproaches—"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir!"—and then the "best belt" is found to be out of order, the

"beautiful new brass buckle" all wrenched and broken. The delay is so long that the head of the house, a severe matron, comes up in person, justly suspecting that something is wrong.

Punishment for the violated buckle was adjourned; time pressed, and Mr. Bickers was waiting. I was led down to him by the hand.

"O you wicked creature! Will nothing touch your hardened heart!" was the speech hurriedly addressed to me outside the door; and I recal my amazement at the histrionic power which inside the door could immediately assume a sweet soft smile, saying, "Here, Mr. Bickers, is Sidney come down to see you."

I see him now, his red malacca cane stretching out from his knee, and making a sort of camp-stool with his two legs, his hat on the ground beside him, the unfailing sherry—to me almost as inappreciable in taste as the manna I used to hear of on Sundays, and thought must have been so delicious to the Israelites. The air was heavy with a close fragrance of cake, rich and plummy. That perfume always brings him up before me. My sisters were sitting round, "like ladies, sir." Their eyes were upon him. He was saying, "Now Miss Lucy, will you tell me where is the Island of Madagascar?" Miss Simpson, this being her department, looking on with pride tinged with a little nervousness. The Pariah, however, instead of walking up with alacrity, "like a gentleman," as usual skulked, terrier-like, to the wall, and there stood, glowing and glowering, his eyes darting fire and suspicion.

"Come over here, sir, to me," says Mr. Bickers, with a severe eye.

The Pariah won't answer. The maternal eye, wistful, agonised almost, is on him. "Oh, Sidney!"

"Come here, sir," Mr. Bickers says sternly.

"I don't want to," the Pariah bursts out, with his thumb in his mouth.

Mr. Bickers had a new Quarterly Review in his hand, which he had brought to read my mother "a fine passage on the liberty of the press." He had been doing this. She would have thought anything he read, fine.

"Bring me over that knife, Sidney."

The police had to interfere, and I recal the instrument being hurriedly forced into my hand, and my being propelled towards him. When close I tried to free myself, and half dropped, half threw away, the odious instrument. Movement fatally misconstrued.

"O, sir!" says the Rev. Mr. Bickers, in mixed horror, sorrow, and anger, "for shame!"

"O, Sidney, Sidney," says the parent in agony. "Take him away up-stairs. O, you wicked, wicked boy!"

Pariah hurried out, much as the prisoner just found guilty is huddled down out of the dock.

A council was held. Mr. Bickers gave a great deal of advice. "I had thrown the paper-knife," it seems, at him. In one so young, such a bad sign. Not that he minded it, "but for the boy's own sake, my good lady, you must curb those germs with a strong hand."

If he gives way to his passions now, what will he do when he is older and stronger, and has more dangerous weapons in his power?"

So did this artful monster—making the "attempt on his safety" an excuse for fresh and copious applications to sherry—inflame the case against me. That awful day long remained in my memory. There were passionate tears, bursts of weeping, over this profligate wretch. The halter was again dangled before me. A premature and disgraceful end on a public scaffold, was assumed as certain. In the darkness of my cell, I shrank and cowered from the dreadful prospect. The memory of that day's work was always kept green by frequent allusion to the day "when you threw the knife at Mr. Bickers." An obviously unfair garbling and inflaming of the whole transaction!

II. JOHN MANBY.

AN important member of our household, and a remarkable person in his way, was an elderly sort of major domo—he was scarcely butler—always seen in decent black, and who went by the name of John Manby. Every one knew "John," or soon came to know him, for he had been in the family, according to that indefinite measure of length "man and boy," for some forty or fifty years. He was more like a retired schoolmaster than a domestic, for he always wore a white high neckerchief of the Lord Melbourne or Canning model, a great bunch of gold seals at the end of a flat chain, and a silver watch that was always accurate, and went in surprising conformity with a remote post-office clock. He was proud when an appeal was made to this instrument, though he had to raise it to the surface with infinite pains from the "fob" by a process almost like engineering. His phrase always was, "*A half after two*"—an expression peculiar to himself; or, in a more vague form, "*better than half-past two*." A man much above the common; had seen the world; had made a voyage or two to Buenos Ayres, where he had been offered posts of trust, which he had declined; had lived much in France, and could speak French of a certain sort. This reputation gave him a grave and possessed manner. Sometimes he would relate fragments of his eventful life in a graphic way that was peculiar to him, especially that voyage in the "*Bay o' Biskey*," when he, with the other passengers, was "*lashed*" to the mast (he revelled in that nautical word, and would not accept "*tied*" on any terms)—was "*lashed*" to the mast, and "*the waves now would mount—ay, just forty-five thousand times the hoight of that house there!*" Then "*away they'd go from anunder us, and down we'd go just forty-five times the depth of that pillar there.*" He had curious recollections of Bath, Cheltenham, and fashionable places of that sort, then in the heyday of their reputation, and of exploits of the late Colonel Berkeley, whose failings he evidently regarded with fond extenuation on the score of "*the beyewtifullest carriage-and-four you ever saw!*"

the noblest long-tails! and he himself on the box driving, with the two little tigers behind, the creatures!" His French adventures were no less entertaining in the "*Shangs Eleesay*" and other delightful places of resort. In his sage moments he would air his French. "*Wee, meshoo! Allay ongho,*" and the like. Visitors of that country he received with many bows and courtesies, always complimenting them by addressing them in what he considered their own tongue. "*Resty, madame, le sally toot sweet;*" at which the amazed foreigners, rather proud of their own broken English, would stare haughtily. Long after, when this retainer attended the family to that bright and sunny land, half professionally, half because he wished for change of scene, as the steamer touched the pier, and the crowd of fisherwomen, whose privilege it is to deal with the luggage, came on board, a stream of old forgotten French poured back on him, and he was seen struggling with these singular creatures, battling for his trunks, and addressing them in spasmodic "*Lessy, lessy! Cumsee, cumsa! Wee, wee! Metty toot sweet!*" invitations put aside, I fear, as one would the harmless cachinations of a Carribee. At home stranger visitors would be often taken aback by the overpowering cordiality of his greeting. "*O, you're welcome fifty thousand times, ma'am, no less. Walk in! 'Tis them that will be glad to see you. O, you must step in and rest yourself!*" Others who might have known him in some previous state, recalled themselves good naturedly. "*Glad to see you looking so well, John. Just the same as ten years ago.*" "*Well may you wear yourself then, and indeed the same can be said of you. Indeed, I am glad to see yourself, sir, and well you are looking!*" After this mutual and delightful recognition, it was a little mortifying for the guest at the drawing-room to find John returning with a confidential and secret air, as if he was paying a compliment: "*Who shall I say, sir, for I don't rightly mind me of your name?*" Of any hypocrisy in the transaction John was utterly unconscious.

Between him and the governess raged the hostility that was natural. He would be heard amusing himself, taking off what it must be confessed was her rather hyper-cockney accent. Sometimes unpleasant conflicts would take place between them, in which the poor lady's position placed her at a disadvantage. He was admirable in the execution of all his duties, and had the same conscientiousness and pride in having his plate clean and all his things in the most perfect order as a coachman in the condition of his horse. He was always contriving new arrangements, carpentering, nailing, &c., to make things "*tidy*"—a favourite word of his—and "*something like*"—his highest commendation. He encouraged the same spirit above stairs, and gave us short and sometimes severe lectures on our disorderly arrangements. This "*was scandalous, so it was!*" Everything rookum-rakum, up and down. Wait until tomorrow, next day, and see how it would be

then! Such a *rocomawolia* as it was! But he gave it up, and the whole kit might go to rookum-rakum—hand or foot; he'd never stir!" Laying the table, he would comment on the length of dress of the young ladies present. "Sweeping the gutter up! O Modyee! Modyee!" (a corruption of the French *mon Dieu*!). "After that! Really, now, I was ashamed of ye—to see ye born ladies coming along gathering up all the mud in the gutter!"

He strongly objected to what he considered extra professional duties—too much opening of the door; after which he said "his heart was broke, up and down, up and down"—or to being sent out on messages—or, above all, to entertainments. His constitutional antipathy to a dinner-party was so marked, that it was not without trepidation that the news of such a festival being in contemplation could be broken to him. It was usually received without any reply, and with a slow descending the stairs, and perhaps a muttered "Well! after that, now!" He went through the performance with restraint, however, for he knew what was owing to himself. But the next day a sound of metallic chinking, maintained all the morning, showed what was in progress. He would then repair up-stairs, and with a mysterious manner pointedly invite Miss Simpson down stairs. He meant to convey that she was his chief enemy, but he wished to have even her testimony.

"What is the matter, John?"

"Just come down, miss. It's high time it's all to end—high time!"

Below, on the sideboard, were ranged all the plates, knives, spoons, symmetrically sparkling. He wished everything to be counted, the inventory to be taken as strongly as could be against him. There were the two glasses he broke last year, and *he knew* who spoke about that, but no matter now—it was all at an end *now*; and after his *forty-five* years' service, it was a poor thing to be going out on the world, &c. This scene came gradually to be in the usual course, and was expected as regularly as the rising of the sun on the day after each banquet. Mutual concessions and explanations were made, and after a little weeping—for he had the gift of tears—things were happily composed.

Sometimes the Pariah and he had a falling out, and that was a far more serious business. Once he acted the unworthy part of a spy or informer, and words could not pourtray the scorn and loathing with which I looked at him. He seemed to me all over a palpable leprosy—of a moral sort. I considered him outside the pale of society, as one whom all good men might hunt down or kill. One evening I plotted this exquisite vengeance. To the realms below, where were kitchen, pantry, &c., a dark stair led down. The plan was this. I got a large step-ladder, a parlour chair or two, and the plate-warmer, and laid them down sideways at the top of the dark stair as a sort of barricade. The light was beyond the title of dim or religious—it was sheer darkness. I then rang the

bell, and waited in ambush. I heard his step; and then came an awful crash—a human form tumbling, the wooden clatter of the chairs and ladder, the jingling of the plate-warmer, and a human voice uttering maledictions mingled with pain. The recognised police were out shopping, but I heard scrambling, as of feet taking two steps at a time, and fled. I had barely time to save myself in the garret, to bolt and barricade the door, when he arrived. Such agility in one of his years was surprising. His threatenings, half intelligible as heard through wood, but acquiring a Pythonic grandeur from their very indistinctness, scared my very soul. He went away at last, but did never betray me.

Indeed, he was to be admired, and unconsciously implanted in me early convictions of the value of a steady rule of life, and the sense of *duty* and of the unconscious weight and value in this world of the *respectable* qualities and steady virtues. I would see him making his way with a facility that seemed to me little short of magical. His surprising powers of access and of easy approach to others was, no doubt, owing to his travels and to his having seen the world. I never shall forget my astonishment on the occasion of some royal visit, when the gaping crowd were gazing with an almost *fetish* admiration at the scarlet positions' liveries and the mirror-like panels, when he was seen alone, within the charmed circle, in easy conversation with one of the august postillions. From that personage he obtained the most curious information as to there being "forty-five of the beautifullest horses daily maintained in those august stables, and that the head-coachman was in receipt of a thousand a year." Police sergeants and inspectors were invariably courteous to him, and yielded him privileges which they did to no one else. At a ball or rout at some great house he was invariably taken in from the inclemency outside, and entertained in the private snugger of the steward. If a great ship arrived in harbour, he had been all over her, and had even had a pleasant interview with the captain, who in the most affable way had offered him something out of his locker. This mysterious charm was the secret of his power.

III. MR. BLACKSTONE.

I LOOK out of the study window, and now see Mr. Blackstone, the new tutor, hurrying up the street, his neat frock-coat flying out to the breeze, his two fingers poisoning the neatest of known umbrellas. A small spare man, smaller chested, with orange-coloured hair, and whiskers that seemed made of cocoa-nut fibre. The neatest, most precise of men, not yet a clergyman, but to be one; full of a strong sense of duty and office and responsibility, and who we knew had supported two elderly and useless sisters by his own overworked brain. So had he laboured on through his college, laboured to his degree, and was labouring to a curacy, always respectable, neat, and scrupulous in his

frock-coats. He had a neat little house in some suburb, where everything was looked after carefully, where "the tuitions" found meat and found drink, and clothes and comforts for himself and for his sisters. Dim notions of this remarkable struggle reached me then, but, I am afraid, were not appreciated with the delicacy and forbearance they deserved. He was one of the enemies, the hostile tribes that were brought to the house, and subsidised to harass me. His weary toil and honest motives were nothing to me. We had many a ferocious encounter. The neatest of men; a penknife always about his person, with which he cut his pencil to the finest and truest point. I always admired, even envied, his dexterity in that, foeman as he was (my own heavier and perhaps clumsy touch invariably broke off the lead at an early stage; I cut away too much). His calligraphy was perfect. There was a little manuscript volume, ye!ept A Judgment Book, or his Judgment Book, divided and subdivided and ruled with surprising neatness. In this a daily "finding" was set down for the several departments: for Greek, the grammar, Thucydides, &c.; for Latin, the grammar and Virgil; for syntax, prosody, &c. In French he was scarcely so strong. In this classical direction we got on tolerably; it was over Euclid and the mathematics that fearful scenes took place. "So you have not written that fourteenth problem as I told you?" No answer, Mr. Blackstone sitting back in his chair, and a pink tone coming into his face. No answer. "You have not done your work?" No answer. "Eh?" Pause; then, in a suddenly loud burst: "What is the meaning of all this, sir—this continued insolence? Ah! ah!"—starting up, and his fist trembling close to my face—"if I had you at a school, sir, I should flog you while I could stand over you. But I'll make you speak out before I have done with you." Once, and once only, Mr. Blackstone so far forgot his restraint as to indulge himself with a sound box on my ear. It was on an occasion of great aggravation. But ordinarily he felt himself in the relation of the ecclesiastical tribunals, who, after dealing with any prisoner subject to this authority, would hand him over to the civil power for punishment. "Very well, sir," he would say; "I shall give you the worst mark in my power. You shall have the pleasure of presenting to your family, this evening, bad marks for every one of your tasks. Go on, sir; persevere in this course, and you will grow up a credit indeed."

Later in the day—a little before dinner—it was customary to summon the pupil "to bring the judgment book." And on rare days it was easy to know, by the flow of spirits and universal cheerfulness that reigned through the mansion, that "Sidney had nothing but good marks." As an acknowledgment, and at the same time an encouragement to renewed exertion, wine—two glasses even—was served to the winner of such honours. He was neither modest nor elated unduly, for he knew how pre-

carious was this sunshine. It almost invariably fell out that this "spurt," as it might be called, was followed by an immediate and almost disgraceful relapse; and it was almost a certainty that on the next day the pupil, on being summoned, would present himself and his book, with a well-known sullen and dogged bearing, which, to experienced and anxious observers, betokened the worst.

I see, in connexion with Mr. Blackstone, two young gentlemen whom he attended regularly before he came to me, and from whom to me he proceeded straight—William and Arthur. The coming into human life of those model, well-brought-up, and virtuous youths, was a matter which I a thousand times wished could have been otherwise arranged. Arthur and William were too perfect and too well brought up. Arthur was the elder and taller, though, as for that matter, had there been a fair field, and the domestic police tolerant, I should have handsomely waived my own inferiority in stature. The general thirst for knowledge, and the model behaviour, of these appalling youths, was quoted to me a thousand times. It was now driven into me like a needle, now hurled heavily on my head like a club. Every step of the decorous progress of those two young gentlemen was marked for me as with milestones with agonies of all descriptions, and for them was represented as sure to culminate, not merely in the highest civic honours, as in the instance of the virtuous apprentice, but in wealth, and ermine, and an illustrious alliance; while for me there was a life of dishonour, with that discreditable scene at the end to close all. Those odious Arthur and William Goodmans! If "your new green frock, sir," was discovered to be stained, or perhaps torn up the back, while the punishment settled by statute was being inflicted, the victim heard that "Arthur Goodman would cut off his little finger before he would do such a thing!" (the only result from which lesson was, a fiendish desire on my part to officiate as operator). Was I arrested, red-handed, as it were, or rather red-mouthed, stealing away, when the jam-pot had been feloniously broken into, when brought before the magistrate and sentenced, was not the punishment invariably accompanied with the taunt, "It would be long before William Goodman would do so mean and ungentlemanly a thing. He would have let his right hand be cut off." &c., &c.

We used to meet these well brought-up youths of a sudden, on the way to church, they politely walking together arm in arm; our families would join, and they would be invited to fraternise, which I did with suspicion and defiance. The Sunday's meal would afterwards be seasoned with odious comparisons, "so gentlemanly, such charming manners! When would I be anything like that? But I was utterly hopeless, nothing would ever be made of me."

Nor was Mr. Blackstone behindhand in respect to these boys of accursed virtue. As he sat down, and moved his throat in his snowy

starched collar, and stretched his arms to get his white cuffs well down—clearing the decks, as it were, for action—he would say, looking at me, “When do you mean to lay yourself out to learn anything, for I tell you what, my good friend, if you go on in this way I really don’t see what end there is to be.” Here of course another veiled allusion to the extreme penalty which was my doom. “I have just come from the Goodmans’, and do you know what they both asked me this morning? To begin Optics with them. I give you my honour and word, they did, and I have half promised to begin Optics with them; for such zeal deserves to be encouraged.” The feeling in *my* mind as I listened to this extraordinary request was either that they were monsters or that the world was turning upside down. “I wonder,” added Mr. Blackstone abstractedly, “will *you* ever think of such a thing?” And he looked at me abstractedly, and then there was a pause. And then he made that “tzut tzut” sound people make when they meet something disappointing; shook his head slowly at me, not from side to side but up and down; and said, mournfully, “Well, give me the prosody.”

The day that these prodigious Goodmans asked to be taught Optics was a sort of disastrous Ides of March for me. On that occasion, the first of the month, Mr. Blackstone’s honorarium was always delivered to him over wine and cake in the drawing-room, and polite and general conversation always took place in my presence, on the subject of myself. In the face of sherry Mr. Blackstone was forbearing, would hold out rather encouraging hopes, would trust that Sidney would soon see how necessary it was, he should begin to apply himself. “I was just telling him” went on Mr. Blackstone placidly: meaning me no harm, but unconsciously adjusting the rope round my neck: “that Arthur and William Goodman had come to me to beg that I would teach them Optics. Shows a very diligent spirit. Indeed, as I told Mr. Goodman, I have seldom met with such an instance.” I think at this moment Mr. Blackstone saw the mortification and despair that was in the face of Sidney’s parent, and added with some encouragement, “Still, I am sure we shall have *him*,” nodding to me, “asking to be taught Optics one of these days—yes, one of these days.” Finding no encouragement in imparting this most improbable hope, Mr. Blackstone passed to another branch of the subject. “I was thinking,” he said, “that as Arthur, and William, and Sidney, are pursecueyew the same course of studies it would be an additional spur to their ceemulation.” Mr. Blackstone delighted in these rich words, and from presence of the old oily sherry into which he was looking at the moment, seemed to gather kindred imagery. “I was thinking it would steamewlate ceemewlation if we had a sort of competition-examination in the various branches. I think, with a little study, he,” nodding to me, “would be able to hold his own. He knows his Euclid fairly—very fairly

indeed. And to the candidate who answers best, you will allow me to present a nicely bound copy of Sturm’s Reflections.”

This project was received without enthusiasm, even with dejection, as only tending to fresh disgrace. “O! *he*”—they never *would* call me by my name—“will never study. *He* doesn’t care to distinguish himself,” &c. But Mr. Blackstone warming at the prospect succeeded in drawing a picture of victory, and brought round the whole family.

The period that followed I shall not soon forget. The operation of “grinding” me was taken in hand personally by Miss Simpson, “for this occasion only;” her capacity for the dead languages being equal to the duty of “hearing me.” I was duly called up and made to rehearse in Alvarez’s Prosody, the Latin Grammar, the Greek ditto, Mangnall’s Questions, and other works. Virgil and Thucydides presented more serious difficulties to Miss Simpson, but the happy idea of securing a literal translation of the text suggested itself, and thus, being challenged to translate, I was successfully checked in any attempt at imposition.

The day came at last. In the interval, I hope and believe that the industrious Goodmans nearly killed themselves with study. I really worked hard; and in the house were a flutter and excitement, as it were of something akin to a marriage. It was indeed the first public act our house had known; the first entry on the broad stage of the world. There seemed to me an impression that it might get into the public papers. I proceed to the description of this tremendous occasion under a fresh heading.

NOW!

I NEVER saw but one hanging in my life. On that occasion my duties brought me into close contact with the culprit himself. I attended him on the scaffold and was with him to the last. The newspapers described the execution in the usual terms. They did not describe what I saw or heard. It may be they were justified in not doing so; it may be even, now when public executions have happily become a thing of the past, that I am not justified in recording an unprofessional view of the tragedy I witnessed. My plea is, that I have never yet read what has impressed me as a truthful account of any such scene.

As it can serve no possible purpose to mention real names I will simply state that the execution referred to, took place in a Northern Assize town, not very recently. The condemned was an old man of at least seventy; his offence, the brutal murder of an old woman, his wife.

I first saw the old man, say Giles, at seven o’clock on the morning in question. He was sitting in his cell, his head bent forward, and slowly shaking from side to side, not with trepidation, but with the tremulous palsy of old age that was natural to him. He was evidently a man of the dulllest sensibilities, and in

whom feeling had become still more numbed by the consciousness of his approaching fate. He had passed a good night, and had freely partaken of that hearty breakfast which, strangely enough, all such felons do partake of for their last. The governor of the gaol entered to bid him farewell and to introduce the Sheriff. Giles shook hands with both, he stolid and emotionless. There was a little pause. They expected some one else. It was the only time Giles showed any feeling at all. He stopped shaking and looked furtively but eagerly towards the door. Even that was only the emotion of impatience. Calcraft entered. A mild gentle faced man—short, rather stout, with plentiful grey hair. I can see him as I write—his eyes full and grey, though small, and sweet in their expression. He does not “shamble,” as he walks; nor does he talk coarsely. He walks softly at such times, as in the presence of impending death, and his voice is by no means unpleasant. His walk, his voice, his expression, and his manner, are in fact, completely reassuring. They were so to Giles. Having been introduced to his executioner and seen the calm self-reliant look of his eyes, Giles became perfectly calm, and resumed the monotonous shaking of his head from side to side. I can testify that whether from age or mental stupor he was the least affected of us all; and I am told this is usually the case.

Half-past seven o'clock struck, and the prison bell broke out in a harshly solemn toll. While we were getting ready to leave the cell it began—Toll! As we walked along the corridors it went on—Toll! It struck upon all our hearts—Toll! except Giles's.

Having entered the pinioning-room the chaplain began the solemn service for the dead. “I am the Resurrection and the Life”—Toll! “Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die”—Toll!

Calcraft produced a small black leather portmanteau. Opening it, he disclosed his pinions, spare straps, and two ropes. The pinion is simply a broad leather strap or surcingle to go round the waist, having strong loops on either side, through which are passed the straps to secure the elbows. The wrists are then fastened by another strap.

“It's my own invention,” Calcraft whispered with some modesty; “the old pinions used to be very bad, they hurt the poor fellows so. They used to strap their elbows tight behind them and force them together at the back, and then strap the two wrists together. This waist strap answers every purpose and is not the least uncomfortable.”

“There,” he whispered to Giles (for the chaplain still read on), when he had arranged the straps, “that doesn't hurt you, my good fellow?”

“No, sir; it's very comfortable.”

And the chaplain still read on, and the bell broke in like a solemn amen. “For since by man came death—” Toll!

“Shake hands with me, Giles,” said the mild

man with the grey hair; “say you forgive me. You shall not be tortured.”

“I forgive thee, mister;” and he offered his poor pinioned hands, like fins, which Calcraft shook kindly. Toll!

“There's one thing I should like 'ee to do,” said Giles.

“Yes,” said Calcraft.

“Will 'ee tell I when *it's comin'*. Thee know what I mean.”

“I will,” returned the executioner. Toll!

The “Lesson” was not yet finished. No one of us paid attention to it, or to any of that part of the service (least of all did Giles), save when the bell struck out like a solemn voice from the sky; “Heed that!” Then we remembered the word or two that had gone before. To me the reading of the clergyman sounded like the babble of a dream, and the bell, and the gentle old man, and the pinioned murderer the only realities. (Toll! “And how are the dead raised up?”)

I saw Calcraft return to his black portmanteau to select the rope. Intent, against my will, more on the details of the dreadful tragedy than on the service, that only broke out on me in snatches, I pointed to the cord, and whispered,

“New?”

“Oh, no; the same I've used these three years.” (“Changed as in a moment.” Toll!)

“I thought you always had a new rope?”

“Oh dear, no.”

“Is it silk?” I had heard so.

“No; the very best of hemp.”

He gave it into my hand. A supple cord, soft as silk, as thick as my forefinger. (“Oh! grave, where is thy victory?” Toll!)

“And the cap?”

“Ah, yes! It's the sheriffs'—the one they use here—but it's a bad one. I would rather use my own. Look here”—and he took from the portmanteau a small bag, like silk, and inserting his hands in it, stretched it out to an enormous size—“that's the one, if they would only let me use it.” It was the only professional remark he made.

The lesson was done. Toll! Toll! Toll!

The bell ceased. It was the service by the grave side.

We joined in procession. “Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery.” Chanting this solemn dirge in monotone, the chaplain led the way along the passage and up a ladder staircase to the prison roof. Giles followed, shambling uneasily from the straps about his legs, but otherwise in less outward concern than any of us. He seemed to derive relief from that palsied swaying of his head which was natural to him.

As we mounted the scaffold, a restless murmur, like a great sigh, went through the sea of white upturned faces below—then a hush. Calcraft came to the poor culprit, and drew the cap over his face, to hide the sea of faces from his eyes. Then he fixed the rope—with long pains to arrange the knot in the most merciful place,

and to judge the amount of fall. While this was doing, Giles worked his hands—all that were free of him—up and down rapidly in the attitude of prayer. The chaplain was reading a prayer. The reporters said he prayed. They were wrong. I was close to him, and I heard what he said. His words were addressed to Calcraft. "Tell me, mister—be I goin' now?" "No," said the executioner; "I'll tell you when."

The prayer was done.

"Tell me, mister," said Giles again, "be I goin' now?"

"No," said Calcraft. "I'll give you a sign. When I shake hands with you, you will have just half a minute left."

The chaplain knelt to pray with Giles. Giles did not or would not hear.

"Be I goin' now?" he said.

Calcrafft came and shook his pinioned hand. "God bless you!" he said, gently, "for it is now!" and he slipped away.

Then the old man woke up; all his senses quickened by the knowledge that only one half minute of precious life remained—only one half minute! Till now he had been numbed and lulled into the belief that it was a long way off. Now it was come. He broke out, as rapidly as he could gabble:

"Oh Lord, have mercy on my poor soul! Oh Lord, have mercy on my poor soul! Oh Lord, have——"

Cr, *chunk!* And there was a fall, and something was waying to and fro, to and fro, till at last it became steady, and twisted from right to left, from left to right. And there was the noise of a crowd that had been silent, that drew a long sighing breath of relief, and woke up into life to go about its business.

LEAVES FROM THE MAHOGANY TREE.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF FRENCH COOKING.

YOUR practised historian can, as is well known, make a very pretty whipped cream by beating together half-a-dozen theories seasoned with two or three facts cut into very thin slices for garnishing. But this dish is too light and unsatisfying for some stomachs, and we therefore regret that so little has been preserved to enable us to form any sound conclusion as to the sorts of cooking that nourished and delighted the French of the dark ages.

The old Roman and Greek cooks went out at one door when the howling Norsemen and their raven banner broke in at the other. The days of epicurean glory were followed by a long and terrible obscurity, as Brillat Saverin says in his own exquisite way:

"At the apparition of these fierce strangers the alimentary art disappeared with the other sciences of which it is both the companion and the consoler. The greater part of the cooks were massacred in the palaces which they had nourished; others fled to avoid being compelled to regale the oppressors of their country;

the few who offered their services had the mortification of seeing them rejected. The ferocious mouths, the scorched throats, were insensible to the charms of refined cooking. Enormous joints of meat and sides of venison, with immeasurable quantities of the strongest liquors sufficed to please them; and as the usurpers were always armed, most of their repasts degenerated into orgies, and the banquet hall too often swam with blood."

Gradually civilisation stole in and parted the ponderous joints into humanising side dishes. Friends were invited not to glut their hunger, but to be regaled. The great Charlemagne, amid his dreams of European empire, took a personal interest in his table; and it appears from his Capitularies that he studied wisely and carefully the epicurean resources of his vast domains.

The French kings, contemporaneous with our Henrys and Edwards, gave a gallant and chivalrous character to their entertainments, as we see in Froissart. There was great luxury and splendour too at the table of John of France, and at that of the early Louis.

Both at Paris and Windsor the knights of those days saw with exultation the pheasants with gilt claws, or the peacocks with emerald and purple plumes outspread, borne through the castle hall by pages glittering with gold, while the warriors, bound on deeds of high emprise, flashed out their swords, and vowed to save Bordeaux or storm Beauvais in the name of "The Peacock and the Ladies." Now that women had come back to the dining-table to humanise society by their presence there were hopes for good and refined cooking once more.

In such wealthy and luxurious courts as those of the Sforza, the Borgias, and the Medici, cooking soon became a high art. We must recal the domestic pictures of Bellini, of Titian, and of Giorgione to realise the banquets of those times. The spices that the Venetians brought from the East came in excellently to heighten the flavours and strengthen the taste of the happy inspirations of the new art. The palate, too, of our ancestors differed in its liking from ours. The pre-Raphaelite Italians liked to flavour their ragouts with the perfumed waters of Arabia and Moorish Spain, and they sometimes boiled fish in rose-water. Even down to Elizabeth's reign this unnatural taste continued, and ambergris was largely used in cooking at the tables of the great. Indeed the good time came on so fast, that the French kings were soon obliged to issue sumptuary laws, which met with the usual fate of all attempts to bridle fashion or to restrain luxury.

The crusades had at least this one result, that the French crusaders bore with reverent hands the shalotte from the sandy battle plains of Ascalon and brought it to the European kitchen. There can be no question than the science of modern French cooking is an edifice of many stories, which the great and wise of many centuries built up stone by stone. The

major domos of popes, lady abbesses, kings' favourites, learned artists, Arabian alchemists, Venetian physicians, have all helped to rear this imperishable Tower of Babel. The cooks taken prisoners by Louis the Twelfth when he invaded Italy, cast their bread upon the waters, and it returned to them before many days. Many of the *recherché*, light, and tempting dishes, invented by these exiles, and tinged with the sentiment of their situation, still obtain in France. Empires may pass away, but the *fricassée* will remain. A feminine grace was now added to the robust cooking of the middle ages. This was a time of greater inventions than steam. Steam! Why it is to the time of Leo the Tenth that we are indebted for the *Fricandeau*, that delicious larded segment of veal, stewed with bacon, spices, carrots, onions, and parsley, and served with Macedonian sauce or *sorel*. The sublime inventor of this delicious morsel was Jean de Carême (Jack o' Lent), who derived his name from a celebrated soup *maigre*, which he invented for the Pope, his master. He was the direct ancestor of our modern Carême, who was cook to George the Fourth, and afterwards to Baron Rothschild. It was the same Pope who fostered the genius of Raphael and the genius of the discoverer of the *fricandeau*.

It is also more than probable that we owe the useful invention of forks to this same splendid and luxurious age. The Romans had no forks. It took man five thousand five hundred odd years before he could invent the *fricandeau* or discover the use of forks. Think of that! Voltaire's statement that forks were in use in Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries has hitherto been disputed; but we have lately discovered a fact which we think is important, as it upsets many previous theories of social historians. Hitherto Fynes Moryson, an Elizabethan traveller, and Thomas Coryat, a Jacobean traveller, have always been quoted as proof of the earliest mention of forks as a new invention of the sixteenth century. Moryson says, "At Venice each person was served (besides his knife and spoon) with a fork to hold the meat while he cuts it, for there they deem it ill-manners that one should touch it with his hand." Coryat, writing in 1604, describes with his usual Peppysian unction the Venetian custom of forks and umbrellas, and adds of the former, "I myself have thought it good to imitate the Italian fashion since I came home to England," and describes his merciless friend, Mr. Whitaker, who does not scruple at table to nickname him "Furcifer," from his fantastic predilection to those "Italian neatnesses," namely, forks. Now, at the present Art Exhibition at Leeds, there happens to be a singular picture by Bernardino Pinturicchio (1454-1513) epitomising events in the history of the Piccolomini of Siena (Number Eleven, Gallery A). In one part of this picture there are tables laid out ready prepared for a banquet. They stand near a buffet of several tiers, on which are arranged gold cups and chased sal-

vers. On the tables you can see a knife and fork laid for every guest, besides a *manchet* or roll. There are also Venetian enamelled red dishes, and if we remember right, little *nosegays* placed with great taste for each person. This, therefore, clearly proves that though Voltaire might be hasty in placing the introduction of forks as early as he does, yet that forks were in full use in Italy before 1513. The fact is incontrovertible.

But the great epoch in French cooking was when Henry the Fourth, his favourite the Duchess of Beaufort being dead, married Mary of Medicis.

Mr. Hayward, who has written so learnedly, and with such refined taste and pleasant humour on the gastronomic science, particularly mentions that the culinary artists in Mary's train first introduced ices into France. Yes; that delicious sweetmeat ice, perfumed with the essence of fruits, was the invention of a contemporary of the divine Raphael.

The great Condé, the foe of Mazarin, and the knightly leader of the Fronde and the slingers of De Retz's party, was nourished and supported at Roerui, that great fight, and at the great jostles of Sens and Nördlingen by the good cooking of his immortal *maître d'hôtel*, Vattel, that generous spirit who threw himself on the edge of his own sword at Chantilly, because an insufficient quantity of turbot and lobsters had arrived from the seaports, the second day of the king's visit.

In his old age Louis the Fourteenth, methodical in everything, a formalist, and a stickler for the severest etiquette, became fanciful about his diet; and it was to protect him from the grosser fat of cutlets that Madame de Maintenon devised the celebrated *Côtelettes à la Maintenon*. The wily devotee first stewed the cutlets in the Venetian way for an hour with mushrooms, shallot, parsley, rasped bacon, and a little butter. She then seasoned them with salt and pepper, cut some bacon into the shape of hearts to place at each side of them, wrapped them in oiled writing paper, and broiled them on a very slow fire, so that the paper might absorb all the grease; then she put in a spoonful of *velouté*, and thickened with the yolks of three eggs, mixed with cream, lemon juice, and a spice of cayenne pepper. What a delicate proof of ever vigilant love! These cutlets were no doubt suggested by the overpowering genius of Béchamel, the author of one of the most exquisite sauces ever devised by man. It is made of butter, slices of veal, ham, onions, mushrooms, and parsley, stewed together, but in what proportions we can only mention privately, and to acknowledged gourmets; several spoonfuls of flour, some *consommé*, and a little boiling cream bring this divine sauce to final perfection. Liqueurs are said to have been invented to console the old age of the Grand Monarch. Distillation, the alchemist's art, brought to Europe, it is said, by the Crusaders, if not derived from the Moors in Spain, had not led to the general use of brandy much before the

early part of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth. The alcoholic basis, sweetened with sugar and enriched with perfumes, proved to be capable of infinite shades of variation. The old medical cordial became the new liqueur of the dinner table. The last beverage the king partook of on earth was a liqueur from Provence.

Louis the Fifteenth was essentially an epicure, and nothing else. Louis the Fourteenth had crossed the Rhine bravely, had driven his coaches full of ladies round besieged places, and had excelled at tennis and pall mall; but Louis the Fifteenth excelled in nothing except dining. His little suppers at Choisy were gayer and more riotous than the formal parades, or rather religious ceremonies that Louis the Fourteenth organised at Versailles, as magnificent and as tedious as the splendour of that exhausting place. The conversation, the abandonment of royalty, was not to be witnessed by profane eyes, and some great mechanist, patronised by the Pompadour, met this want by inventing the tables volantes, which, descending to the kitchen and rising again to the state apartments, must have been perfect, except that, through the opening trap door must have arisen oily steams from below. It was to please this voluptuous, vain, and selfish king that the Duchess de Mailly wasted her ingenuity by inventing the Gigot à la Mailly.

Louis the Sixteenth was too full of his key making and ironmongering to care much for eating. He neglected to keep his friends in good humour by good dinners, or to win his enemies by those matelottes and truffled turkeys, for which the Duke of Orleans had been famous. So naturally he succumbed before the Revolution.

The restaurants, commencing in 1770 with the Champ d'Oiseau, Rue des Poulies, were probably at first started in imitation of English taverns, and indicated the advance of democratic opinions. In 1789, the Parisian restaurants had increased to one hundred, in 1804 to five or six hundred, and they now far exceed a thousand. The Almanac des Gourmands attributes the growth of these useful establishments and the consequent dissemination of refined and high cooking among the masses to several reasons. First, the inundation of legislators, who, dining out, made it by degrees fashionable to frequent the restaurants; secondly, the breaking up of the houses of the rich secular and clerical nobility, whose cooks took refuge and found a generous asylum in the restaurants. Foremost among these Mariuses was Robert (he who invented the most *intellectual* of sauces) cidevant chef of an archbishop of Aix. Lastly, it was generally supposed that the new rich men of the Revolution, with the whizz of the guillotine still in their ears, were not anxious to flash their wealth in the eyes of a jealous mistrustful and dangerous people, and, therefore, hid away their hospitality, and devoted themselves to the unobserved luxuries of the public restaurant.

Napoleon ate like a soldier whenever the

appetite came, night or day, and eventually shortened his life by it; but there was no real royal epicureanism till Louis the Eighteenth rolled back with the Bourbonists. His great friend and adviser on culinary matters of state was the Duke d'Escars. The prayer of this able man's life was that he might be immortalised by inventing a lasting dish; but he never did, or if he did, he showed the true devotion of a Decius, and let his friend and sovereign enjoy the fame of the discovery.

History has not decided whether the favourite dish of Duke d'Escars and Louis the Eighteenth was truffes à la purée d'ortolans, or as some writers insist on having it, a pâté des saucissons. Whenever these two globular men, the Duke and his royal master, closeted themselves together to perfect this dish, or to discuss the first thought of another, the following announcement always appeared next day in the official journal,

"M. le Duc d'Escars a travaillé dans le cabinet."

The duke fell a victim at last to the truffe à la purée d'ortolans, a dish which the king kept a secret from the servants and always prepared with his own hands, aided by the duke. This time the dish was larger than usual, and at breakfast the noble pair ate the whole of it. At night they were both taken dreadfully ill. The duke was soon pronounced hopeless, but, faithful to the last, he instantly ordered the king to be awoken and warned of the danger of a similar attack. The king was aroused and told that the duke was dying.

"Dying?" the king exclaimed, with admirable feeling, and more philosophy—"dying of my truffes à la purée? You see, then, I was right. I always said that I had the better stomach of the two."

Alas for human anecdotes! Other versions of this story say that the king also suffered, and that a witty and sarcastic French journal announced the event, thus coarsely and in the worst possible taste:

"Yesterday, his very Christian majesty was attacked with an indigestion, of which M. the Duke d'Escars died this afternoon."

Louis le Désiré was an epicure to the last. With all his tact and sense and bon mots, he was an eater quite as regardful of quantity as quality. Between the first and second course he would often have a plate of exquisite little pork cutlets, dressed after a rare recipe, handed to him by one of the pages. He would take these trifles up one by one with his white fat fingers, and clear the dish before the second service could be arranged.

The Revolution brought in the pièces de résistance and potatoes au naturel. The celebrated Rocher de Cancale, established before 1804, and broken up since 1848, first gained its name by M. Baleire, its founder, bringing oysters to Paris fresh at all seasons. The Rocher was especially famous for frogs and (we shudder to record it)—Robin Redbreasts—yes, those innocent birds, who sing, like weeping children, the dirge of the year and the fall of

the leaf, are of a delicate bitter flavour; and at Metz and in Lorraine and Alsace form an important article of commerce. The *Almanac des Gourmands* says, with ruthless irony:

"The redbreast is the sad proof of this truth, that the gourmand is by nature and in his very essence a being cruel and inhuman; for he has no pity on this charming bird of passage, whose gentleness and confiding familiarity should shelter him from the rude hands of the cook. But, then, if one pitied everybody, one would eat nothing; and, commiseration apart, we must allow that the robin, which holds a conspicuous rank in the class of beccafici, is a very succulent roast. This amiable bird is eaten *à la broche* and *en salmîs*."

Frogs are delicious fricasseed or fried with crisp parsley, so says an eminent authority, and what all France also says and half America confirms must be true. The first frog we ate, we took for a young rabbit, until we shuddered on finding its blanched bones soft and gristly. We do not know when these amphibious creatures were first bred and fed for the table. We have a suspicion that frogs are not eaten so much in Paris as they used to be thirty years ago. The animal has grown scarcer, but the snowy hind legs, gracefully extended on a plate, are still seen in the Parisian markets.

Research has not enabled us to ascertain either, at what date that nutritious article of food, snails, was first used in French cookery. They are still sold in heaps in the shops on the quays near the Louvre, and are also to be seen in glutinous cohesive masses in the shops of small restaurants in ambiguous streets leading out of Leicester-square.

French cooking, historically considered, recalls some pleasant scenes to every one who has ever crossed the Channel. There is something very sociable and pleasant in the way in which a French bourgeois family prepares for a meal. I see one before me now. The English of the same class too often sit down in a sullen, stolid, revengeful way, preserving a dead silence, and apparently sworn to begin the attack at the same moment. They really do manage these things better in France. The good *bonhomme* tucks his napkin in his top button-hole, his smiling wife adjusts the serviette round the neck of her favourite Madelaine, the youngest; the bread is made a matter of great study. After the soup is gone, the wholesome but not inebriating *Medoc* is turned impartially into the glasses. The slices of veal pass round, and are selected with discrimination, yet without selfishness. Last of all, comes the little dessert, that fitting finale for a light and digestible dinner. "The Four Beggars" are discussed with simple-hearted unction, the figs praiséd, the nuts commended, the raisins eulogised, the almonds admired.

"Pooh, sir! It is all very well," grumbles our true Englishman; "but a frivolous nation that has never been free since the first Revolution, and not then, is naturally disposed to rejoice for small indulgences."

Yet, Monsieur l'Anglais, it is a great thing to be easily pleased.

A French restaurant is a pleasant place, and how unlike an English dining-room! What can be pleasanter than a seat near the open door on a summer evening, say at Vélour's? The noise is a complex but not disagreeable sound. Trees rustling without, the children playing with their bonnes; twilight yielding to lamplight gradually up the arcades; a comedy close by, and you imagine what it will be—scenes from the Revolution as once enacted in this pleasant square gleam red across the mirror of your glass of Burgundy. The waiters skim and flit about, cheerful and epigrammatic, delighting in the applause with which special dishes are received, and proud of their benevolent occupation. How monsieur and madame enjoy their dinner, crowing over each plat, smiling at the freshness of the salad, applauding the fragrance of the meringue! How they laugh at the smallest of jokes, and make *bon mots* upon their favourite waiter! How they address themselves to the coffee and the *chasse*! The gaiety of the French waiter, and the way he finally dashes up the items, is worth the price of the dinner in itself.

What agreeable memories the travelled Englishman brings with him too from the Continent, of his dinners at French railway stations. Such kindly promptitude, such bland alacrity to oblige, such an honest wish to fully earn the money and see the meal quietly enjoyed. On the great French line to Strasburg you can now have a dinner of several covers brought you in your railway carriage; you eat as you go, and return the dishes and plates by the guard. This is luxury indeed! But the ordinary French railway-station dinner (especially when there are not too many *epergnes* and too much plate upon the table) is very pleasant. The warm, nourishing soup, the savoury cutlet or slice of veal, with sorrel, the hot meat and cresses, the sweet omelette, the macaroon, and bunch of grapes, all come in such tasteful order, and are so fairly what they seem, that they make us shudder at the thought of the English railway station, with its vapid beer, dry biscuit, and stale sandwiches, the costly peppered soup that is never ready when you want it, the salt ham and the leaden pork-pie!

The great tree of French cookery struck root on the day when Mary de Medicis set foot in Marseilles; it is still throwing forth its lavish branches, and may it flourish till the crack of doom! France, foster-mother of the vine, what tyrant or conqueror can break thy plates or put out thy stoves, while thy various provinces feed thee with such dainties! Strasbourg and Toulouse with foies gras, Angoulême with partridge patés, Le Mans and La Flèche with capons, Périgord with truffled turkeys. Nérac sends her terrines; Sarlat her red-legged partridges; Arles her sausages; Troyes her little tongues and her fromage de cochon; Cancale and Etretat send their oysters; Strasbourg gives her salmon, carp, and crawfish; Rouen her ducklings, Dijon, Chalons, and Rheims send their mustard,

Aix her peerless oil, Verdun her sweetmeats, Metz her ortolans, Pithiviers her larks and almond cakes, Alençon her fat geese, Orleans her vinegars, Cognac her eau-de-vie, Bordeaux her anisette, Montpellier her cream of Mocha, Cette her oil of roses, Brignolles her preserved plums, Ollioules her plums and figs.

Many scientific brains, and many artful hands, have for centuries experimented on French cooking, which, if less solid than English, is more appetising, more alluring. Science will doubtless continue to be devoted to this great art, which has done much to extend peace, binding families and nations by a common tie of social interest which no inroad of barbarians can snap.

DOLES.

My old college chum, Tom Bradshaw, had recently been appointed rector of Doleshurst, and wheedled me down to spend a week's vacation with him. The day after my arrival,—at breakfast-time too—he startled me with this question:

"Can you guess what I have in that leathern bag beside you?"

"It is uncommonly heavy," said I. "Probably geological specimens."

"Wrong," he replied; "you have there three thousand bright profiles of her gracious majesty, impressed on three thousand florins fresh from the mint."

"What can you want with so many florins?"

"Why, you must know that they have made me a sort of trustee down here; that is, the clerk, the sexton, and the keepers of five beer-shops, met the other day, and unanimously elected me a trustee in place of my predecessor. A worthy old dean, leaving the world in peace three or four hundred years ago, bequeathed an estate, which now produces more than three hundred pounds a year, to be given away in charity. Now, it strikes me that this three hundred pounds just serves the purpose of the 'potation money,' which, you know, fell to our lot as Blueboys at the old school of Winterbourne. I am told that for two or three days after this dole is distributed, there is an unusual proportion of black eyes and broken heads in the village. The money, it is said, is all spent in tippling, and I will find out whether that is the fact."

The morning of the next day was a busy time with the clerk, the sexton, and the five publicans. They distributed little tickets to all comers—old, young, and middle aged. It was a day of idleness to the ticket-seekers. They lounged in groups, or sat outside the village inns, and smoked and drank their ale contentedly. In the evening the ticket-holders passed one by one through a room where my friend and I sat; I took the tickets from each, and for every ticket he gave a florin. The claimants were chiefly labourers or peasant children. I thought that the dole, though small to each,

might be a help where the family was large. There were some, however, whose dress and bearing proved that they did not need the dole; and I noticed that all the broken-down delinquents of the neighbourhood were present. The business was done quickly, however, and without confusion. There were, indeed, some sounds of strife outside, and rough voices demanded of crying children the coin they had received. But that was soon over, and my friend and I gladly returned to the rectory and its waving trees.

That night there was little sleep at Doleshurst. We strolled out into the darkness, and passed through the straggling town. The five beershops were all lighted up from basement to attic, and broad bands of light fell from their windows on the street. Sounds of contention, complaint, entreaty, and drunken passion, mixed with choruses of tuneless song. Now a door would be opened, a struggle would be visible in the passage, a knot of men tangled together would be ejected into the street, and then would follow curses, threats, and blows. Here a weeping wife supported a staggering husband; there, little children, pulling the unwilling hands of the maundering father, led him away.

Next day my chum and I went on a curious errand. We visited the five beershops in succession, and told the five keepers that we wanted a large number of florins. In all the beershops there were piles of florins, soiled wet florins sticking together. The bright silver, with the exception of a very small percentage, had found its way within twelve hours into the publicans' tills. Thus, the dole, like the old relief given at the monastery gate, produced poverty, idleness, and vice, and more was lost by the labourer who received it than the wages he forfeited in seeking and spending what was designed to afford substantial relief to deserving but poor men.

This incident at Doleshurst set me upon a search, and I soon found that dole funds are very numerous, and that, almost without exception, this kind of charity does nothing but mischief. Parliament has recently contributed to blue-book literature a series of twenty-four ponderous octavo volumes, of several hundred pages each. It is named the Report of the Commissioners on the Endowed Grammar Schools of England. In the first volume of the series, I found a brief record of some of these ancient doles and their results. At Almondbury, four hundred and fifty pounds are annually distributed to the poor in sums of five or six shillings; and the vicar says, "the beneficial effect is neither seen nor felt longer than two or three days at most." The vestry of another parish distribute five hundred pounds a year, and the vestrymen appoint tradesmen as distributors. When a baker is elected distributor, the dole is given in bread; a coal factor thinks there is nothing like coals; a publican distributes ale and gin. In another parish for "two weeks before and one week after the distribution, extra waiters are put on at the beershops." At Bewdley, in North Wor-

cestershire, the Mill Meadow Charity amounts to one hundred pounds a year, and this is given in sums of from two shillings to eight shillings and ninepence each. On the last distribution, out of a population of three thousand one hundred and fifty-eight, one thousand three hundred and eighty applicants appeared, "among them many people of substance."

At Lichfield six hundred pounds a year is given away in gratuities, and during the summer market gardeners waste high wages "in expectation of living on charity during the winter." At Chesterfield, out of a charity producing fourteen hundred pounds a year, eleven hundred pounds is disposed of "in small sums, and in a manner every intelligent person considers unsatisfactory." There are apprenticeship funds amounting to fifty thousand pounds a year, yet the charity inspectors think that the fees are frequently divided, by an underhand arrangement, between the parent and the master who receives the boy. The charity funds in England, applicable to doles, "cannot amount to less than one hundred and twenty thousand pounds a year, wasted as water poured upon the sand." At Chipping Sodbury, there is an apprentice fee fund; there have been only thirty-eight applications in twenty years, and the accumulations amount to six hundred and sixty pounds. In the City of London, there are charities "for the redemption of poor persons and captives." One fund, amounting to one thousand seven hundred and forty pounds a year, has accumulated to upwards of fifteen thousand pounds, "for which there is little, if any, use at present." Sir T. White's loan charities have a capital of one hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds. There is a loan fund in Westminster with thirty thousand pounds, "and very little purpose to which it can be applied." Persons borrow two hundred pounds or three hundred pounds from such charities, at one or two per cent, and place it in joint stock banks at five or six per cent. There is in the parish of St. Andrew Undershaft, a sum of thirty thousand pounds and there are many other funds of a similar kind in the City of London, devised as aids in the payment of the ancient and obsolete tax called "The Fifteenth." The trustees do not know what to do with these sums. At Melton Mowbray, there is the Tower estate administered by a tumultuous "Tower meeting," and as no poll is taken, "the decision depends on the first one hundred people who can get into the small town hall." At Berwick, after the expenses of the corporation have been defrayed out of an old estate, producing now ten thousand pounds a year, the surplus is divided among the freemen under the name of "Stints and Meadows," the town clerk receiving ten pounds or eleven pounds yearly.

Such doles and bequests were possibly suited to a state of civilization very different from the present. But society has outrun all the conditions which the testators contemplated in their age. This is a utilising epoch; and since

my short visit to Doleshurst, I fancy that something more suited to our day, and better for the people, could be effected by charitable bequests than scattering them in silver florins broadcast among an idle mob for the special benefit of beerhouses.

MUSIC AND MISERY.

THE more people love music, when it is good and comes to their call, the more they usually hate and abhor it when it is not good, and comes unbidden. Even the best of music, when it breaks suddenly upon the ear of one who is engaged in thoughtful labour or hard study of any kind, is not agreeable; but when discord, instead of harmony, bursts upon the outraged silence of the library, the studio, or the sick-room, then is music but another name for misery.

Business lately called me to London for a week; a consideration connected with its facile transaction led me to take up my residence in one of the streets branching southwards from the Strand to the river; a quiet street to all appearance—a highly respectable street, a street through which ran no omnibus, and into which no cab or other vehicle ever penetrated, unless to set down or take up a fare, or to deliver the goods duly ordered. I had not been three hours within these peaceable precincts before I discovered that the transaction of business in this respectable street was simply impossible, that I had been deceived by false appearances, and that as a residence it was a very Pandemonium of discords and evil sounds from daylight until long after dark. The lodgers in every house—for it is a street of private hotels and "apartments to let"—appeared to be, like myself, people who had come from the country, but who, unlike me, were idle, and fond of the amusement to be extracted out of street music and street exhibitions. One particular day, being detained at home against my will, the thought struck me to note down from hour to hour the arrival and the departure of these nuisances, the nature of the torture they inflicted, and the encouragement or discouragement which they received from the lazy, the silly, or the generous inhabitants. The day was not an exceptional one, as I was informed by my landlady, but a fair sample of every day in the year.

Half-past Eight.—Sitting down to breakfast and *The Times*, I hear a sudden and obstreperous outburst of brazen instruments, which makes me literally start to my feet and rush to the window to see what is the matter. It is a German band of twelve performers, all well dressed in uniform, and wearing each a semi-military cap. They set up their music-stands in the street, and play from printed and manuscript music. Their performances consist of overtures and pieces from popular operas, very excellently rendered. I am told that they are hired by one family to perform twice a week before the door, and that they supplement the

gratuity or payment which they may receive for this service by such smaller contributions as they can collect elsewhere. They do not rely upon the crowd of bystanders, or upon voluntary contributions, but send round the youngest member of the party, who knocks or rings at the door of every house in the street, and, hat in hand, gathers whatever coppers the servant girl or others are inclined to bestow. He appears to be successful in about one house out of three. The performances continue for about twenty minutes, and would not only be tolerable, but commendable, if they took place in one of the parks at a seasonable hour, or people were not compelled to listen to them unless they pleased.

Nine o'clock.—A bulky Savoyard, ugly as a baboon, and as dirty, with a barrel-organ. He grinds, *Partant pour la Syrie*, *Not for Joseph*, and *Champagne Charlie*. His tunes are such a nuisance that I put my hat on, go to the street door, and order him away. He pretends not to understand me. I speak to him in Italian, and let him know that I shall hand him over to the police if he will not immediately desist from grinding. He swears and scowls. I reiterate my threat. He sees I am in earnest, and finally slings his heavy organ upon his brawny back, and sulkily departs, followed by the not very amiable wish on my part that he had his box of discords in his paunch instead of on his shoulders.

Twenty minutes to Ten.—Eight sham niggers—white men with blackened faces—wearing the usual absurd caricature of negro costume which does duty in London and elsewhere, for the dress of the plantation negroes in the Southern States of America. The leader of the band does not blacken his face, but wears a mask to represent Panchinello. He is active, well made, agile, and a good low comedian. This party sings both comic and sentimental songs, almost, if not quite as well, as the real Christy Minstrels, whom people pay their half-crowns to hear. Windows are lifted right and left, and pence and half-pence rattle on the pavement. The cooks and servant girls appear to be the chief patronesses of the show. The niggers stay for a quarter of an hour, and march off at a sign from Panchinello. They evidently make a good thing of it, and are prime favourites.

Half-past Ten.—Two young men, ragged and shoeless, invade the street, and sing, "We have no work to do-o-o," with the usual drawl. They are not very successful, but far more so than they deserve, and get a solitary penny from the house that hires the brass band. Seeing they have no chance they depart, to the great satisfaction, it is to be presumed, of everybody, even of the small children, and of the cooks and the housemaids.

Eleven o'clock.—An old man, thinly clad and feeble, with venerable grey hairs, whistling, but so very faintly as to be scarcely audible. He presents so forlorn an appearance, and his idea of attracting anybody's attention by such a

weakly performance, appears to me so absurd that I pity him to the extent of a penny. I throw it out to him wrapped in a piece of paper. He catches it in his hat, opens the paper, takes out the penny, and spits upon it three times (for luck I suppose), and goes on whistling. Poor old fellow! He at least has not the power, even if he had the will, to make the street hideous with noise. It is possible that I should not have heard his faint attempt at music, if my attention were not specially directed to the subject, and very doubtful whether any one else in the street is aware of his presence.

Fifteen minutes past Eleven.—A drum. An abominable monotonous outrage. It is a Lascar beating the tom-tom, and every now and then breaking out into a moan, a whine, a grunt, a shriek, or all these four diabolically blended into one. He is the most repulsive and savage-looking creature I ever beheld. Gaunt and wiry as a hyena, and with the same hideous expression of countenance, he strongly impresses me with the idea that he must be Nana Sahib, who massacred the women and children at Cawnpore, or some other Eastern scoundrel quite as detestable; if prolific nature has ever yet produced a match to that specimen of her handiwork. There is no policeman to be seen, and I think if I were a policeman, I should be rather shy of tackling such an ugly customer.

Five minutes past Twelve.—Another brass band, the performers boys and lads from the "Fatherland," who play so loudly and so execrably that I wish the "Fatherland" had them back again, or that Count Bismarck would take hold of them for the next Sadawa, that his own or his royal master's ambition or vanity may compel him to fight. They perform for ten minutes. At their cessation the silence is delightful.

Twenty minutes to One.—A woman grinding a barrel-organ, with a baby fast asleep upon the top of it. The tune is the eternal *Partant pour la Syrie*. When she ceases for a moment to collect pence the baby awakes: when she recommences, it falls asleep again. She traverses the street slowly from end to end, receives a penny. She then mercifully, or perhaps hopelessly, makes her way out and grinds no more.

Quarter past One.—An Italian boy, apparently of about fourteen years of age, with a hurdy-gurdy. He whistles to it as an accompaniment. The combination is horrible and past endurance. I go to the window and order him away. He stops whistling, to grin at me, and removes himself to the distance of two houses, where he recommences his performance. If there be a policeman in sight, I shall assuredly have him removed per force majeure. But no policeman has been seen the whole morning, and none is visible now. This young tormentor plagues me and the street for five minutes before he goes his way. I feel towards him, as I did in the case of his elder

compatriot with the barrel organ, that I should have been glad if his hurdy-gurdy were in his entrails, and persisted in remaining there and playing for a week!

Twenty minutes to Two.—Another Italian, with a barrel organ and a monkey. The monkey very like a Fenian, the man not so good looking. Why does not the *Re Galantuomo* keep these lazy Italians to himself? This fellow would make excellent food for powder. Two little children and a nursemaid at the opposite side of the street, seem delighted with the monkey; but what their opinion of the music is, I have no means of judging.

Half past Two.—A performer on the cornet-a-piston, plays *The Last Rose of Summer*, and *Auld Lang Syne*, neither very well, nor very badly. His music brings up half-a-dozen female heads from the areas on either side of the way. He makes, what is in theatrical parlance called a succès d'estime, but does not favour the street beyond ten minutes.

A quarter past Three.—A lad in shabby Highland costume, exhibits a pair of legs that do not show to advantage, and plays villainously on the bag-pipes, the well-known air of *Bonnie Laddie*. The cooks, housemaids, and children, seem to be well pleased; but when he changes the air to the *Reel of Tulloch*, the joy of the little ones grows frantic. Three or four girls of eight or ten who have strayed down the street from some of the contiguous alleys on the other side of the Strand, get up a little dance on the pavement. A policeman, for the first time during the day, makes his appearance. What he might have done, if the performer had been a negro minstrel, singing the *Chickaleery Cove*, I know not, but he evidently neither admires the music of the bag-pipes, nor the sight of the little children enjoying themselves; so he orders away the piper in a manner that shows he is not in a humour to allow his authority to be trifled with. Resistance being hopeless the piper departs and blessed silence once again prevails for a brief space.

Five minutes to Four.—A blind old man, playing the violin, led by a young woman—possibly his daughter. His tunes are mostly Scotch, and miserably perverted. If no one were permitted to play an instrument in the streets without a licence, and if none but the blind were eligible for the privilege, the plague of minstrelsy in London might be beneficially diminished. I make a present of this idea to any metropolitan member who thinks well enough of it, to introduce it to the legislature.

Ten minutes past Four.—Punch and Judy, the most popular theatrical performance that ever was invented, and known and enjoyed by millions, who never heard of *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, and never will. The street suddenly seems to swarm with children, nor are older people at all scarce within two minutes after the familiar squeak. The policeman again turns up. He has apparently no objection to Punch,

or if he has he makes none. The play proceeds; and as it is opposite my window, I make the most of it—and if I must tell the truth, I enjoy it. The dog that appears towards the last act, is a first-rate performer, cool and collected; and when Punch hits him a little too hard, he fastens upon Punch's nose in a manner that impresses the audience with the idea, that he thoroughly believes it to be flesh and blood. Good dog! I should think that Punch clears about eighteenpence by this little interlude, sixpence whereof was mine, for I had been seen to laugh, and could not expect to enjoy such a luxury without paying for it. If the manager of this ambulatory theatre repeats his performance ten or a dozen times a day, with the same pecuniary results, he must make what is called "a tolerably good thing of it."

Five o'clock.—Barrel organ, Champagne Charlie, Not for Joseph, and Adeste Fidelis. No policeman.

Twenty-five minutes past Five.—Barrel organ. Partant pour la Syrie. How I hate it! Followed by Adeste Fidelis, which if possible, I hate still more. No policeman.

Six o'clock.—An old man with a fiddle; an old woman with a concertina; and a younger woman with a baby at her breast. The young woman sings, and the older performers murder the music. This is even a worse infliction than the barrel organ; and lasts for about five minutes. Much as the street seems to love music, it evidently does not love this specimen of harmony, and not a single halfpenny rewards the trio.

Twenty minutes past Six.—A man leading a Newfoundland dog, with a monkey riding on its back. The man beats a big drum to attract attention. Somebody rises from the dinner table, throws a bone into the street to the dog, which speedily unhorses, or I ought perhaps to say undogs the monkey, and darts upon the prize in spite of the opposition and the kicks of his master. The monkey performs several little tricks—holds out its paw for halfpence, mounts and dismounts at word of command, but not until the dog has crunched the bone and made an end of it, with as much relish as if it were flesh; and is altogether so popular with the children and the servants, as to earn the price of a dinner for his owner. The monkey gets bits of cakes and apple from the children, the dog gets another bone, with a little meat on it, and the partnership of the man and two beasts, departs in peace; to amuse the children somewhere else.

Seven o'clock.—More mock niggers—seven of them. They sing *Ben Bolt*, *Moggie Dooral*, *Little Maggie May*, and others, which, I presume, are the popular favourites. A family just arrived—as is evident by the piles of boxes on the roof of the two cabs that carry them in detachments—and possibly fresh from the rural districts, where black minstrelsy is rarer than black swans, stand at the windows, and listen. To be seen listening is to be seen approving,

and to be seen approving means money. The minstrels are asked for the repetition of Little Maggie May, and, after compliance, receive what looks like half-a-crown, as it flashes from the window to the hat of the leader. Half-a-crown is not much among seven, though it is evidently a much more liberal gratuity than generally falls to the lot of street musicians, if an opinion may be formed from the expression that gleams on the sooty and greasy face of the recipient.

Half-past seven.—A barrel-organ. No policeman.

Eight o'clock.—A woman, "clad in unwomanly rags," with a thin weak voice, dolefully chaunting Annie Laurie.

A quarter-past eight.—A barrel-organ. Policeman in the street, for a wonder; is told to expel this performer, and expels him accordingly. The man persists in grinding as he goes up the street to get out of it. "Leave off," says the policeman, sharply, and in the tone of a man that means mischief if he be thwarted; and the tune ceases. The policeman walks down the street, up again, and disappears; and in less than five minutes the organ fiend—for such this particularly pertinacious vagabond deserves to be called—re-enters the scene of his discomfiture, and begins to grind away triumphantly at the Old Hundredth Psalm. "I suffer him, in an agony of spirit, for a full ten minutes. He meets no encouragement, and retires. May he grind organs in Pandemonium for ever and ever—amen!"

Nine o'clock.—The tinkling of a guitar, well played, succeeded by the rich full voice, of a cultivated soprano, singing the old ballad, Comin' through the Rye. Here, at last is something worth hearing. Looking out I see a well dressed woman, with a small crowd around her. She next sings, Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon, and renders it beautifully; afterwards, The Last Rose of Summer, equally well, followed by Bonnie Dundee, sung with a spirit which would do credit to any stage. This person is, I understand, a protégée of my landlady, and visits the street regularly every week. She meets otherwise with very considerable encouragement. She has sought, but hitherto in vain, to obtain an engagement at the music halls. "One reason is," she says, "that negro melodies and comic songs by ladies are more popular than Scotch songs, or than sentimental songs of any kind, unless they are sung by a man or a woman with a blackened face." Another reason, perhaps, is poverty, and the want of good introductions. My landlady says she is an honest girl and has been well enough educated to read music and sing at sight. Can nothing be done for her? I ask. "Many gentlemen," replies the landlady, "have been greatly pleased with her singing, and promised to exert themselves to get her an engagement of some kind, however humble, to take her out of street singing; but it has been all cry and no wool; and nothing has come of it."

A quarter to Ten o'clock.—A tremendous

hullabaloo! and loud cries of "Awful murder! awful murder! Second edition—Second edition!" I send down to know what is the matter. It is a sell—a sell—a palpable sell—and no murder at all; and the servant brings me up a fly sheet, printed on one side, like the halfpenny ballads. This costs a penny; and is the story—I quote literally—of "A married man caught in a Trap, or, the Lovers Detected—a Laughable Dialogue, which took place in a Railway Carriage, between a married gentleman and a young lady in this town, which was overheard by a gentleman, who immediately committed the same to writing." The "laughable dialogue" is not at all laughable, but rapid, silly, puerile, and utterly contemptible. Compared with the vendors of such swindling rubbish, who disturb the night by their vociferous cries, the most villanous organ-grinder of Italy is a respectable man and a saint. If I had the making of the laws and the administration of them afterwards, I think such fellows as these would never be able to vociferate again, either on a false pretence or a true one, after they got out of my clutches.

The above is a fair and true account, and an unvarnished tale of a day's music and misery in London. The real music was not much; the real misery was very considerable. Is there no remedy for such wrong? Cannot a prohibitive duty be put upon Italians and Savoyards at the port of entry? Cannot music, or the murderers of music in the streets, by unauthorised performers be prevented? Or if the children and the servants, and the idle people generally, must have street music, cannot the infliction be concentrated within a couple of hours every day. People must not bathe in the Serpentine after eight in the morning; why should people be allowed to make hideous noises anywhere and everywhere in the business hours of the day?

BAGGAGE UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

WE have most of us in our time suffered more or less from "Baggage." But it is not until the traveller leaves Europe, and gets beyond railways and civilisation that the real miseries of the incumbrance fairly set in. Worst of all do they become, if you travel with an army, especially if that army be in Abyssinia. The endless packing and unpacking, the nice adjustment and fastening of the baggage upon the mules, the numerous break downs upon the road, the incessant delays, and the obstinacy of the drivers, disposed me, when I was in these last mentioned circumstances, to curse my birthday.

Sometimes the duty of looking after baggage was more than an annoyance, for it was not unattended with danger. I had been stationed at Antalo, and one day received orders to go down to Senafe. Two or three other officers were also downward bound, and we decided upon journeying together. Above Antalo,

bands of the robber Gallas pervaded the whole country, and robbed our convoys whenever they saw an opportunity; sometimes openly attacking when the baggage guards were weak; but generally making a sudden rush, plundering the first mule or two and killing the muleteer if he attempted resistance. Many lives were lost in this manner, the Gallas suffering more than our men, for when our men were reasonably on their guard, they were always able to repel the robbers, often with considerable loss. Below Antalo, however, it was considered that the risk was small; a soldier of the Royal Engineers and a mule-driver had been killed, only a day or two before my journey; these were exceptional instances. The natives might and would plunder if they had an opportunity, and they might occasionally murder; but we had no fear of their attacking a numerous party, while the robber Gallas were in our rear, and we were leaving their country every day. The Gallas inhabit the mountain slopes to the east of Abyssinia proper, and the flat country between them and the sea; and it is only near Lake Ashangi that they occupy the plateau land upon the mountain tops. So it came to pass that we took no precaution for the defence of our baggage, frequently allowing it to go on alone, and merely directing the drivers and servants to keep together, and on no account to straggle. Generally, however, one or two of us kept near, simply because experience had taught us that the mules arrived very much earlier at their destination if we were there to urge them, or rather to urge the servants, on. It happened, thus, one morning, that I started alone with the baggage, my companions having some inquiries to make at the station which would detain them two or three hours. The baggage animals were nine in number, and we had five or six servants. With these I rode on for some hours across the plain, when I came upon a party of about twenty natives, who were sitting in a slight depression of the ground. Some seven or eight of them were men, the rest women and girls. They had with them three or four of the little donkeys of the country.

As we approached, the natives rose, and came up to me, exclaiming Gallas! Gallas! and pointing to the country around. They were evidently endeavouring to explain to me that there were Gallas in the neighbourhood. Now, I felt certain that there could be no Gallas within fifty miles, and consequently shook my head in sign of unbelief, and said, "Mafeesh Gallas." (Mafeesh, is I believe an Arabic word, but it is used throughout Abyssinia, and is a general negative; nowhere, none, not, no, are all expressible by Mafeesh. The natives for instance when they heard of Theodore's death, came up to us and drew their hands across their throats, crying in an interrogative tone, "Tédres Mafeesh?" If you inquired for any article which the natives did not possess the answer was "Mafeesh.") The natives were clamorous in the reiteration of their assertion: "Gallas! Gallas! Gallas!" They then by signs demanded if they might

accompany me. To this I assented, although perfectly incredulous about the Gallas. Had I had the smallest belief in the existence of a band of these robbers in the neighbourhood, I should have halted until my friends came up, and could then have proceeded in safety, four Englishmen armed with revolvers being a match for any number of Gallas. Having no belief whatever in the matter I rode on.

At the end of half a mile, one of the natives again came up to my side, and pointing to a ruined village a little ahead, and sixty or seventy yards from the road side, again said very significantly "Gallas!" I rode on, but was checked suddenly by the apparition of some forty or fifty armed natives emerging from the village, and moving across to intercept our march. They were Gallas indeed; there was no mistaking their white robes, which are whiter than and worn in a different fashion from those of the Abyssinians. I confess that I was horribly alarmed. Two or three of us might have made a successful stand, but it was hopeless for one man to do so, if it came to fighting, especially as several of them were armed with guns, and all the rest with shield and spear.

It was useless to think of flight, or I should have given the order instantly. The Gallas would have overtaken the heavily laden mules before they could have gone fifty yards.

There was nothing for it but to put a bold face on the matter. Three of my servants were armed: two with spears, and the third with a sword. They were all Goa men, who, however courageous they might be, would have been utterly useless in a fight, for they are physically one of the weakest races even in India. I told them to keep close by me, and on no account to use their weapons unless I fired, for we must be overpowered if it came to blows. I then drew my revolver and rode up to the head of the baggage. I had still some hopes that they would not attack when they saw an officer with the baggage, and therefore, when I got close to them, I waved my hand for them to let us pass. Their only answer was to draw closer across the road, and I now presented my pistol and repeated my sign to them to clear the way. Their reply was a rush upon the mules; the chief himself, a worthy in a brocaded dress and armed with a rifle, seizing the head of the leading animal. Another minute, and every load would have been off; the only hope lay in Bounce, so throwing my reins to a groom, and jumping from my horse, I had the astonished chief tight by the throat before he knew what I was about. For a moment he struggled to free himself, but a native is a child in the hands of an Englishman of average strength, especially when the Englishman knows that his life is at stake. A severe shake and the exhibition of my revolver to his head soon quieted him. In the mean time the other Gallas rushed up, but the muzzle of my pistol kept them from coming to close quarters. Naturally I am a peaceful man, but upon the same principle that a sheep

driven into a corner by a dog will stand at bay, I faced the Gallas, and I believed even concealed from them that I was not at all at my ease. In the mean time my men were lungeing away with their spears, but fortunately without effect, for the Gallas easily parried their thrusts. I shouted to them to be quiet, for that if they wounded any one we should all be killed to a certainty. The chief now gasped out, "Soultain, taib;" "Soultan," or master, being the term they all apply to the English, and "taib" signifying good.

"It is all very well to say 'Soultan, taib,'" I replied, he not in the slightest degree understanding my words: "order your men to leave my mules alone."

My gestures, and the threatening proximity of the pistol, enlightened him as to my country's language; and, seeing that I was thoroughly in earnest, he did order the men to leave the mules alone. This, however, they hesitated considerably about doing; and it was only after much talk, and a considerable pointing of the revolver, of which they have a great horror, that they let go the animals, and I directed my men to drive on at once. I now saw that all danger was over, and that the Gallas, although ready enough to plunder—as their experience had taught them they could with impunity when not absolutely caught in the act—were yet very unwilling to shed blood, or to injure an officer; the punishment which had fallen upon Theodore, having taught them a rather striking lesson. They have a great national respect for their own lives, besides.

But I determined to prevent, if possible, the unfortunate girls and women, whom they had already seized, from being carried off. The Gallas are slavetraders, and the fate of these poor creatures would have been terrible. I therefore went back, and insisted on their being given up. To this there was great demur. "The soultan was taib," they said, "but these people were not soultans." I replied by pointing to myself, and saying, "Soultan," and then patting the women on their heads, and pointing to the road, to show that they were travelling with me. I had, however, harder work than in recovering the baggage. A hostile group gathered round me, but the chief interfered; and I could gather from his looks and gestures that he was warning them that assuredly vengeance would be taken if they killed an officer. He pointed to my revolver, too, and held up his fingers, showing that it had six barrels; lastly, he pointed to the women with contempt, and then to the villages round, as much as to say, "Why run all this risk for these creatures, when you can get as many as you like anywhere?" This argument settled the business, and, with many exchanges of taib, we parted and proceeded on our respective ways, my party with no greater loss than that of four or five native donkeys, which had been carried off at the commencement of the row. Thus I came out of it, like a hero—to all ex-

ternal appearance—and with the rescued women kissing my boots, as if I had performed prodigies of valour.

A HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL.

It was part of the ineffable system of sweetness and light known as the wisdom of our ancestors, to whip up the children on the morning of Innocents' Day, "in order that the memorial of Herod's murder might stick the closer." The wisdom of our contemporaries, while it has discarded the brutal practice of annually reacting the Massacre of the Innocents on a secondary scale, still retains a trace of the disagreeable mediæval custom, in respect of the strict connexion maintained in many households between Biblical study and afflictive punishment, and the intimate alliance between chapters from Jeremiah to be gotten by heart, and bread and water and dark cupboard. Who the philanthropic discoverer of child-torture as a prelude to a church festival may have been, is uncertain; perhaps he was a near relative of the bright spirit who hit on the ingenious devices—to which the puddling of iron and the glazing of pottery are but trifling puerilities—of confining black beetles in walnut shells and binding them over the eyes of infants; or of that ardent lover of his species—connected with the educational profession—whose researches into the phenomena of physical pain led him to the inestimable discovery that by boring a hole, or any number of holes, in a piece of wood with which a child's hand is struck, a corresponding number of blisters may be raised on the smitten palm.

Our good ancestors—can we ever be sufficiently grateful for the rack, or for the whirling chair framed by medical wisdom for the treatment of acute mania!—blended the Innocents' Day custom with many of the observances of social life. If they were wicked, these ancestors of ours, they were at least waggish in their wickedness. If the boundaries of a parish or the limits of an estate needed accurate record, they laid down a boy on the ascertained frontiers, and flogged him so soundly that he never forgot where the parish of St. Verges ended, or where that of St. Brooms began. Fifty years afterwards, if he were summoned as a witness at Nisi Prius, he would relate, quickened by the memory of his stripes, every topographical condition of the land under discussion. The phantom of this sportive mode of combining cruelty with land surveying yet survives in the annual outings of charity children to "beat the bounds." Formerly the charity boys and not the bounds were beaten; but now the long willow wands with which bricks and mortar are castigated, are falling into desuetude, and although the ceremony is still kept up in some parishes—the rector in his black gown, and a chimney-pot hat, and bearing a large nosegay in his hand, being a sight to see—it is feared that beating the bounds will, in a few years, be wholly abolished, owing to the gradual but sure extinction of

Beadles, as a race. Another vestige of what may be called Innocentism lingered until recently in certain pleasant municipal excursions termed "swanhoppings," when some corpulent gentlemen with a considerable quantity of lobster salad and champagne beneath their waistcoats, were habitually seized upon by the watermen of the Lord Mayor's barge, and "bumped" on posts or rounded blocks of stone. The solemn usage had some reference, it is to be presumed, to the liberties of the City, as guaranteed by the charter given by William the King to William the bishop, and Godfrey the portreeve. Or it might obscurely have related to the Conservancy of the Thames. Substantially, it meant half-a-crown to the Lord Mayor's watermen.

In the south of France, there may be found growing, all the year round, as fine a crop of ignorance and fanaticism as the sturdiest Conservative might wish to look upon. The populace of Toulouse would hang the whole Calas family again to-morrow if they had a chance. The present writer was all but stoned last summer at Toulon for not going down on his knees in the street, in honour of the passage of an absurd little joss, preceded by a brass band, a drum-major, a battalion of the line, and a whole legion of priests. The country people still thrash their children mercilessly whenever a gang of convicts go by on their way to the bagne, and, especially on the morning of the execution of a criminal. And it is a consolation to arrive at the conclusion, from patent and visible facts, that wherever wisdom, in its ancestral form, triumphantly flourishes, there dirt, sloth, ignorance, superstition, fever, pestilence, and recurring famines, do most strongly flourish too.

It may seem strange to the reader that, after venturing upon these uncomplimentary comments on our forefathers' sagacity, the writer should candidly proceed to own his belief that the human memory *may* be materially strengthened as to facts and dates, by the impressions of bodily anguish suffered concurrently with a particular day or a particular event. Such, however, is the fact, although, of course, it cannot be accepted as a plea in extenuation of the most barbarous cruelty. For example, if the next time a tramp sought hospitality at the Guildford union, the guardians forthwith seized upon such tramp, and caused him to be branded with a hot iron from head to foot, and in Roman capitals, with the words, "The guardians of the Guildford union refuse to relieve the casual poor," the stigmatised vagrant would, to the day of his death, remember that Guildford union workhouse was not a place whereat bed and breakfast should be asked for. Still there is no combating the fact that the remembrances of agony are lasting. I have a very indistinct recollection of things which took place twenty, or even ten years ago; and I often ask myself with amazement whether it is possible that I could ever have written such and such a letter, or known such a man or woman. Yet with microscopic minuteness, I can recall a yellow hackney-coach—the driver

had a carbuncle on the left side of his nose—which, once upon a time, conveyed my nurse and myself to the residence of a fashionable dentist in Old Cavendish-street, London. I can remember the black footman who opened the door, and the fiendish manner in which he grinned, as though to show that *his* molars needed no dentistry. I can remember the dog's-eared copy of the Belle-Assemblée on the waiting-room table; the widow lady with her face tied up, moaning by the window; the choleric old gentleman in nankeen trousers who swore terrifically because he was kept waiting; the frayed and threadbare edges of the green baize door leading to the dentist's torture chamber; the strong smell of cloves and spirits of wine and warm wax, about; the dentist himself, his white neckcloth and shining bald head; his horrible apparatus; his more horrible morocco-covered chair; the drip, drip of water at the washstand; the sympathising looks of my nurse; the deadly dew of terror that started from my pores as the monster seized me; and, finally, that one appalling circular wrench, as though some huge bear with red hot jaws—he has favoured us all, in dreams—were biting my head off, and found my cervical vertebrae troublesome: all these came back to me, palpably. Yet I had that tooth out, five and thirty years ago.

A hard road to travel! I should have forgotten all about *that* road by this time but for the intolerable pain I endured when I was travelling upon it. I have crossed Mont Cenis a dozen times, yet I should be puzzled to point out the principal portions of the landscape to a stranger. I could not repeat, without book, the names of the Rhine castles between Cologne and Mayence. I am sure I don't know how many stations there are between London and Brighton. And I am not by any means "letter" or "figure perfect" in the multiplication table, although the road up to nine times eight was in my time about as hard travelling as could be gone through by a boy with a skin not quite so thick as that of a rhinoceros. But every inch of the hard road I happened to travel in the spring of 1864—a road which stretches for some three hundred miles from the city of Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico—is indelibly impressed on my memory. Since then, I have journeyed many thousands of miles over roads of more or less duress; and in the Tyrol, in Venetia, in Spain, in Algeria, I have often tested by sudden inward query the strength remaining in the reminiscence of that road in Mexico. You turn to the right from the great quay of Vera Cruz, passing the castle of San Juan de Allosa. You drive to a wretched railway station, and take the train (I am speaking of 1864) to a place called La Soledad, some five-and-twenty miles inland. There you sleep. Next morning at daybreak you start in a carriage along the great Spanish highway, and by nightfall make Cordova. At four A.M. on the following morning you drive to Orizaba—you are taking things

quietly, mind, in consequence of the road—and pass the day there. Again you start at four A.M. from Cordova for Sant' Augustin del Palmar, where you dine and sleep. The next day's journey brings you, by sunset, to Puebla. On the next day you make Rio Frio in time for breakfast, and at about five in the afternoon you pass the Garita, and you are in the city of Montezuma in the capital of Mexico. That is the road. I spent, going up, six days on the journey; but I was an inmate of a private carriage. I came down again in a public diligence, in three days; but, for reasons I shall explain afterwards, the agony of the private travelling carriage far surpassed that of the stage-coach.

Ostensibly I had no reason for grumbling, I was the guest of a kind friend whose carriage had been built in New York with a special view to Mexican highways, and who, being a great friend and patron of the contractor for the Imperial Diligences—Mexico was an empire in '64—was certain of relays of mules all the way from the sea coast to the capital. We had a good store of wine with us, and plenty of Havana cigars; and in the way of edibles the commissariat of Mexico is as abundant as that of Old Spain is meagre.* The route was singularly clear from highway robbers at that time; the French being in force at Cordova, Orizaba, and Puebla, and patrolling every league of the way, not only with their own dragoons, but with local levies known as contra-guerrilleros. Finally, we had taken the precaution of leaving behind us in safe care at Vera Cruz, our watches, gold "ounces," and other valuables, keeping only a few loose dollars for the expenses of the journey. I even left my clothes and servant on the coast, and during the six weeks I remained in Mexico city was not only boarded and lodged, but washed and clothed by my generous host: even to the articles of purple and fine linen, lapis-lazuli wrist-buttons, a Mexican hat as broad as a brougham wheel, and a pair of spurs with rowels as big as cheese-plates. So, if we had been robbed on the way, the guerillas would have found very little of which to plunder us. The pain, the misery, the wretchedness I endured, almost without intermission for six days—at night you generally dreamed of your

bumps, and suffered all your distresses over again—were entirely due to the abominable road upon which we entered, for our sins, at La Soledad, and which we did not leave until we came to the very custom-house barrier of Mexico. Twelve years have passed since I travelled on the Czar's Highway and found it bad. I have waded through the Virginian mud since then; have made acquaintance with muleback on the banks of the Guadalquivir; have tried a camel (for a very short time), at Oran. But I can conscientiously declare that I never found so hard a road to travel as that road between Vera Cruz and Mexico, and I am confident that, were I to live to sixty years of age (the Mexican railway by that time being completed and paying fifteen per cent on its stock, and a beautifully Macadamised carriage road running beside it for three hundred miles) and I were questioned as to what the Mexican highway was like in 1864, I should, on the "beating the bounds" principle, preserve as lively a remembrance of its horrors as I preserve of it now, a peaceable and contented daily traveller on the North-London and South-Western railways.

Had I not been somewhat obtuse, I might have noticed on board the steamer which brought us from Havana, that my friend was nervous, even to uneasiness, as to the form my earliest impressions of Mexican travelling might assume. I must expect to rough it a little, he remarked. I answered that I had tried an American ambulance waggon, and a McClellan saddle, and that I could not imagine anything rougher than those aids to locomotion. "Our roads are not quite up to the mark of Piccadilly," he would hint sometimes. "You see, since the French came to attack Juarez, everything has been knocked into a cocked hat." However, he always wound up his warnings by declaring that we shouldn't find a single robber on the road, and that we should go up to Mexico, "like a fiddle." If the state in which I eventually reached Mexico, bore any resemblance to the musical instrument in question, it must have been akin to that of the fiddle of the proprietor of the bear in Hudibras, warped and untuned, with my bow broken, a fracture in my stomach, another in my back, and my strings flying all abroad.

I sincerely hope that I shall never see Vera Cruz again, the ill-omened, sweltering, sandy, black, turkey-buzzard-haunted home of yellow fever! I shall not forget, however, that I was hospitably entertained there, and especially I shall never lose consciousness of a long telescope in the saloon overlooking the roadstead, to which I am indebted for one of the drollest scenes I ever saw in my life. There were three or four French men-of-war stationed at Vera Cruz at the time, but they could not lie in the harbour, which is not by any means landlocked, and has but an insufficient breakwater in the castle of San Juan de Alfoa. The Spithead of Vera Cruz is off Sacrificios, a place which owes its name to the horrible human sacrifices perpe-

* It is curious that in countries where wine is plentiful there should be nothing procurable to eat, and that in non-wine-growing, but beer or cider-producing countries, the traveller should always be sure of a good dinner. Out of the beaten track in Italy, a tourist runs the risk of being half starved. In Spain, he is starved habitually and altogether; but he is sure of victuals in England, in America, and in Russia. Even in the East, fowls, eggs, kids, and rice are generally obtainable in the most out of the way places: but many a time have I been dismissed hungry from a village hostelry in France with the cutting remark: "Monsieur, nous n'avons plus rien." There is an exception to the rule in Germany—I except Prussia—which bounteous land runs over with wine, beer, beef, veal, black and white bread, potatoes, salad, and sauerkraut.

trated there up to the time of Cortes' invasion. Sunday being the Frenchman's day of joyous recreation all over the world, leave had been granted, with some liberality, to the crews of the war ships in port; and from our window we had seen, during the morning and afternoon, numerous parties of gallant French Jack-tars—they are so picturesquely dandified in appearance, that they more closely resemble patent blacking than common tar—swaggering along the strand, peeping under the mantillas of the women, kissing their hands to tawny old Indian dames smoking their papelitos in shadowy doorways, and occasionally singing and skipping, through mere joyousness of heart and exuberance of spirits. Many of the men-o'-wars men were negroes from the Mauritius, and it was very pleasant to remark that their colour did not in the least interfere with their being hail-fellow-well-met with the white seamen. But you would very rarely see an American and a black foremast-man arm-in-arm. These fine fellows of the Imperial French navy had, I hope, attended service at the cathedral in the morning; but, as day wore on, they had certainly patronised the aguardiente shops with great assiduity; and spirituous intoxication, following, perhaps, on a surfeit of melons, shaddockes, and pineapples, in a tropical climate, is not very good for the health. Touching at St. Thomas's, once, I said inquiringly to the captain of the mail steamer, "And this is the white man's grave, is it?" "No," he answered, "*that is*," and he pointed to a brandy-bottle on the cabin-table.

I don't think I ever saw so many tipsy tars as I did that Sunday at Vera Cruz. Portsmouth, with a squadron just in from a long cruise, was a temperance hotel compared with this tropical town. It is difficult to repress a smile when one is told that Frenchmen never get tipsy. All that I have seen of French soldiers and sailors on active service, leads me to the persuasion that they will drink as much as they can get; and in their cups they are inexpressibly mischievous, and not unfrequently very savage. Yet, although rowdy, insolent, and quarrelsome, they rarely fall to fisticuffs, as our men do.* On this particular Sunday they so frightened Vera Cruz from its propriety—the inhabitants being mainly an abstemious race, suffering from chronic lowness of spirits, in consequence of civil war and the yellow fever—that pickets of infantry were sent out from the main guard to pick up inebriated mariners and pack them off

on board ship again. The French are very quick at adapting themselves to the usages of the country they visit, and, short as was the time they had been in Mexico, they had learnt the use of that wonderfully serviceable instrument, the lasso. The pickets, wearing only their side arms, went about lassoing tipsy sailors right and left, most scientifically; and after they had caught their men in running nooses, they "coralled them"—that is to say, they would encircle a whole group of nautical bacchanals with a thin cord, which, being drawn tight, the whole body of revellers would be drawn close together. Then, the pickets would, with mild applications of their sheathed bayonets, astern, run the captives down to the waterside, and tumble them into the boats which were to convey them on board their respective ships.

This afternoon's entertainment had continued for some time; and the last boat-load of toppers having been despatched, Vera Cruz was once more left to the blazing sunshine, to silence, to the black scavenger buzzards, and to me. My hosts were all in their hammocks (slung in the corridor), enjoying their siesta. I could not sleep, and bethought me of the long brass telescope on a tripod in the balcony. I got the lens adjusted to my sight at last, and made out the castle of San Juan; the tricoloured flag idly drooping from the staff on the tower; the shining black muzzles of the cannon, looking out of the embrasures of the bastions, like savage, yet sleepy mastiffs blinking from their kennels; the sentinel, with a white turban round his shako, pacing up and down; the bright bayonet on his rifle throwing off sparkling rays. But beyond the castle, some two miles distant, there was nothing to see. Sacrificios and the squadron were "round the corner," so to speak, and out of my field of view. The native craft were all moored in shore; and Vera Cruz is not a place where you go out pleasure-boating. There was nothing visible beyond the arid, dusty fore-shore, but the excruciatingly bright blue sky and the intolerably bright blue sea: Jove raining down one canopy of molten gold over the whole, as though he thought that Danaë was bathing somewhere in those waters. I fell a musing over poor Alexander Smith's

All dark and barren as a rainy sea.

The barrenness here was as intense; but it was from brightness. You looked upon a liquid desert of Sahara. Ah! what is that? A dark speck midway between the shore and the horizon. The tiniest imaginable speck. I shift the telescope, try again, and again focus my speck. It grows, it intensifies, it is, with figures large as life, so it seems, finished with Dutch minuteness, full of colour, light, and shade, colour animation, a picture that gross Jan Steen, that Hogarth, that Callot, might have painted. A boat crammed full of tipsy sailors. There is one man who feels very unwell, and who, grasping his ribs with either hand, grimaces over the gunwale in a most pitiable manner. Another is argumentatively drunk, and is

* You will find, in Algeria, at the military penitentiaries, "disciplinary battalions," formed almost entirely of incorrigible drunkards. The excesses committed by the French in Mexico, and which were generally induced by libations of aguardiente or commissariat brandy, were atrocious; in fact, they bore out, as a rule, the reputation given them by the Duke of Wellington in his evidence before the Royal Commission on Military Punishments. See LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY, AND MUSKETRY, in Household Words, 1851. Five out of ten soldiers who massacred the citizens of Paris on the boulevards in the December of that year, were drunk.

holding forth to a staid quartermaster, who is steering. Another is harmoniously intoxicated. Then there is a man who is in a lachrymose state of liquor, and is probably bewailing *La Belle France* and his Mother. Suddenly a negro, who is mad drunk, tries to jump overboard. Such a bustle, such a commotion! They get the obstreperous black man down and lay him in the sheets, and he, too begins to sing. It is as though you were a deaf man looking at the "propos des buveurs," in Rabelais. And in the midst of all this the boat with its stolid sober rowers goes pitching and bounding about the field of the telescope, sometimes swerving quite out of it, and leaving but a blank brightness; then, coming into full focus again, in all its wondrous detail of reality.

After a night not entirely unembittered by the society of mosquitoes, we rose, took the conventional cup of chocolate, crust of dry bread, and glass of cold water, and, bidding farewell to our entertainers, drove to the railway terminus. I didn't expect much from a railway point of view, and consequently was not disappointed. We have all heard of things being rough and ready. There was plenty of roughness here, without the readiness. It was nearly noon, and the industrial staff of the station, represented by two Indians in striped blankets (serving them for coat, vest, and pantaloons), and monstrous straw hats, were sleeping in two handbarrows. The station-master, a creole Spaniard, had slung his grass hammock in a shady nook behind the pay-place, and was sleeping the sleep of the just. There was a telegraph office, recently established by the French; and the operator, with his face resting on his arms, and those limbs resting on the bran-new mahogany instrument from Paris, snored peacefully. It was the most primitive station imaginable. There was one passenger waiting for the train, a half-caste Mexican, fast asleep at full length on the floor, and with his face prone to it. He had a bag of Indian corn with him, on which, for safety, he lay; and he had brought a great demi-pique saddle too, which rested on his body, the stirrup leathers knotted together over the pommel, and which looked like a bridge over the river Lethe. Where was his horse? I wondered. Did he own one, or had his gallant steed been shot under him in battle, and was he on his way to steal another? Altogether, this rickety ruinous railway station, with the cacti growing close to the platform; and with creepers twining about every post and rafter, and bits of brick, and stray scaffold-poles, and fragments of matting, and useless potsheds, and coils of grass rope littered about in the noontide glare; reminded me with equal force, of an Aztec building speculation overtaken by bankruptcy, and of a tropical farmyard in which all the live stock had died of yellow fever.

The time for the train to start had long expired; but there was no hurry; so my travelling companion lay down with his head on the half-caste's saddle and took a little nap. I wandered on to the platform, and there, to my pleasurable surprise, found one man who was

awake. Who but a French gendarme? One of a picked detachment of that admirable force sent out to Mexico to keep both invaders and invaded in order—combed, brushed, polished, waxed, pomatumed, booted, spurred, sabred, belted, cocked hatted, gauntleted, medalled—a complete and perfect gendarme. He was affable, sententious and dogmatic. "Mexico," he observed, "was a country without hope." I have since inclined to the belief that the gendarme did not dogmatise quite unreasonably on this particular head. He further remarked that discipline must be maintained, and that in view of that necessity he had usually administered "*une fameuse volée*," in the shape of blows with the flat of his sword, to the station-master. He accepted a cigar, to be reserved for the time of his relief from duty; and not to be behind hand in politeness, he favoured me with a pinch of snuff from a box bearing on the lid the enamelled representation of a young lady in her shirt sleeves and a pair of black velvet trousers dancing a jig of a carnivalesque type. "I adore the theatre," said the gendarme. "Monsieur has no doubt seen *La Belle Hélène* in Paris?" I replied that I had witnessed the performance of that famous extravaganza. "Ah!" continued the gendarme, with something like a sigh. "They essayed it at Mauritius; but it obtained only a success of esteem. Monsieur may figure to himself the effect of a *Belle Hélène* who was a mulatto. As for '*Agamemnon*,' he did not advance at all. J'aurais bien flanqué trois jours de salle de police à ce gredin là? I intend, Monsieur," he concluded, "to visit the Bouffés, and to assist at a representation of the work of M. Jacques Offenbach, when I reimpatriate myself and enter the civil." Honest gendarme! I hope the Vomito spared him, and that he has reimpatriated himself by this time, and seen, not only *La Belle Hélène* but *Orphée aux Enfers* and *la Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein*.

The station-master woke up about one o'clock, and it appeared that he had sent a messenger down into the town to ask my friend at what time he would like to have the train ready. There was no other passenger save the half-caste, who would very cheerfully have waited until the day after next, or the week after next, or the Greek kalends. My friend said he thought we might as well start at once, so half a dozen Indians were summoned from outhouses where they had been dozing, and we proceeded to a shed, and picked out the most comfortable carriage in the rolling stock, which was but limited. We found a "car" at last, of the American pattern, open at either end, but with cane-bottomed instead of stuffed seats, and Venetian blinds to the windows. The engine, also, presently came up puffing and sweating to remind us of a fact which had, at least, slipped my memory—that we were living in the nineteenth and not in the ninth century; a locomotive of the approved American model; blunderbuss funnel; "cowcatcher" in front; penthouse in rear for the driver; warning bell over the

boiler, and "Asa Hodge and Co., Pittsburg, Pa." embossed on a plate on the "bogey" frame. Everything in this country which in mechanical appliances can remind you of civilisation, comes from the United States. New York is to Mexico as Paris is to Madrid.

The machine had an Indian stoker, and uncommonly like a gnome, or a kobold, or some other variety of the demon kind did that Indian look, with his coppery skin powdered black with charcoal dust, and his grimy blanket girt around him with a fragment of grass-rope. But the engine-driver was a genuine Yankee—in a striped jacket and a well-worn black satin vest—a self-contained man, gaunt, spare, mahogany-visaged, calm, collected, and expectoratory, with that wonderful roving Down-East eye, which always seems to be looking out for something to patent and make two hundred and fifty thousand dollars by. But for the Mexican hat which he had donned, and the revolver which he wore conspicuously in his belt, you might have taken him for a law-abiding manufacturer of patent clothes wringers or mowing machines, from Hartford or Salem. He "passed the time of day" to us very civilly, and confirmed the good news that there were no guerrilleros on the road. "The French have fixed up a whole crowd of 'em about Puebla," he said, "and they don't care about being hung up by the score, like hams round a stove pipe. I ain't been shot at for a month, and I've loaned my Sharp's rifle to a man that's gone gunning down to the Cameroons."

The long car we had selected was attached to the locomotive, and a luggage van coupled to that, in which a fatigue party of French soldiers who had just marched into the station placed a quantity of commissariat stores for the detachment on duty at La Soledad. We got under weigh, but, the line being single, were temporarily shunted on to a siding: the telegraph having announced the coming in of a train from the interior.

A few minutes afterwards there rumbled into the station a long string of cars, which, disgorging their contents, the platform became thronged with, at least, five hundred men; stranger arrivals by an excursion train I never saw. The strangers were mostly tall athletic fellows, clean limbed, and with torsos like to that of the Farnese Hercules. Noble specimens of humanity: and every man of them as black as the ace of spades. They were in slave-dealers parlance—now, happily a dead language—"full grown buck-niggers." They were uniformly clad, in loose jerkins, vests, and knickerbockers of spotless white linen; and their ebony heads—many of them very noble and commanding in expression, straight noses and well-chiselled lips being far from uncommon—were bound with snowy muslin turbans. These five hundred men, shod with sandals of untanned

hide, armed with musket and bayonet, and the short heavy Roman "tuck" or stabbing sword, and carrying their cartouch boxes in front of them, formed a battalion of that noted Nubian force, of whom there were three regiments altogether, hired from the Viceroy of Egypt by the French government for service in Mexico. They had come down from La Soledad to reinforce the wasting garrison of Vera Cruz, of which the European portion were dying of Vomito like sheep of the rot. The sergeants and corporals were black; but the commissioned officers were Egyptian Arabs, sallow, weakened, undersized creatures in braided surtouts of blue camlet, and red fez caps. They compared very disadvantageously with the athletic and symmetrically built negroes.

These Nubians, my friend the gendarme told me, were good soldiers, so far as fighting went, but irreclaimable scoundrels. They were horribly savage, and jabbered some corrupted dialect with Arabic for its base, but Mumbo Jumbo for its branches, and which their own officers could scarcely understand. The system by which discipline was preserved among them had been beautifully simplified. If a Nubian soldier didn't do what he was told, his officer, for the first offence, fell to kicking him violently. If he persisted in his disobedience, the officer drew his sabre, and cut him down.

Think of a Mahomedan pasha letting out his two thousand pagan negroes to a Roman Catholic emperor, in order that he might coerce the Spanish and Red Indian population of an American republic into recognising the supremacy of an Austrian archduke!

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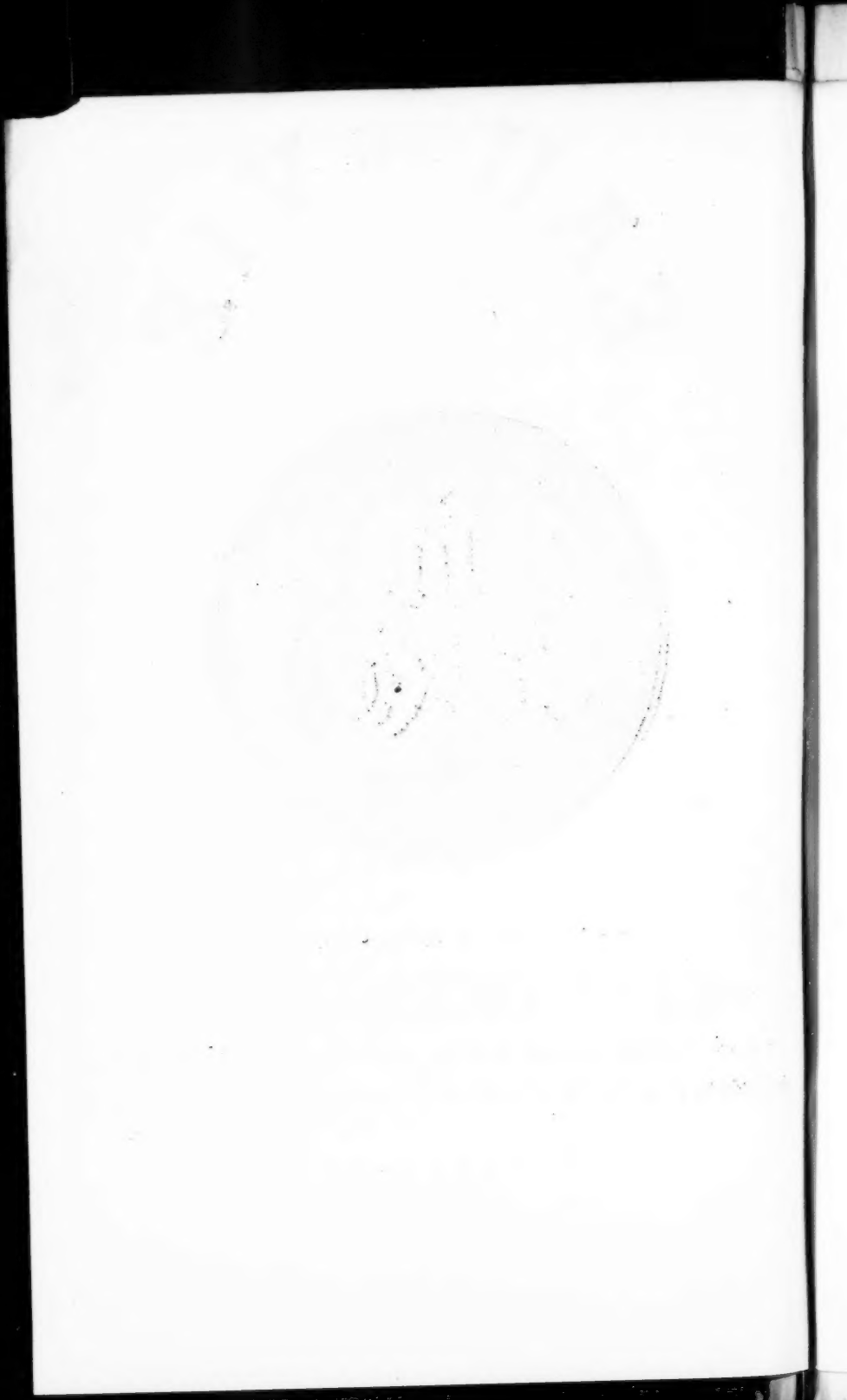
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